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RHYLLON NEAR ST ASAPH.

THE RESIDENCE OF Mrs HEMANS.

London. Published by Saunders & Otley, Conduit Street.

MEMORIALS

OF

MRS. HEMANS

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

OF

HER LITERARY CHARACTER

FROM HER

PRIVATE CORRESPONDENCE.

BY

HENRY F. CHORLEY.

Fothergill

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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MEMORIALS

OF

MRS. HEMANS.

CHAPTER I.

Character of the poems written by Mrs. Hemans whilst residing at Wavertree—Peninsular Melodies—Familiar correspondence—Lord Collingwood's Life and Letters—"The Song of Night"—Moore's "Lines on certain Memoirs of Lord Byron"—"Letter with a symphony"—Spanish cathedrals—Note from Seacombe—Lord Byron's hair—Remarks and illustrations.

ENOUGH has been already said and shown, to give a tolerably complete picture of the na-

ture and manner of Mrs. Hemans' life, during the three years (far from her happiest) spent by her at Wavertree. She had only just reached the fame, which, from its novelty no less than its height, was sure to expose her to curiosity and adulation. She had never before been subjected, alone, to the cares and vexations of domestic life, the presence of which, by contrast, increased her eagerness to escape to those extreme regions of fancy and speculation which nothing earthly or practical was permitted to enter. She had never till then been called upon to bear her part in general society; and while she felt its requisitions irksome, and its enjoyments barren of compensation for time sacrificed and self-restraint enjoined, her desires of home-companionship were stayed, if not satisfied, by the acquisition of a few attached friends to whom she could "show all that was in her heart." Among these, Mrs. Lawrence, of Wavertree Hall, and Miss Park, also of Wavertree, may, without any indelicacy, be par-

ticularized: of the "brightly-associated hours" she passed with the former, herself an elegant Spanish and Italian scholar, a record remains in the dedication to one of her last volumes—the "National Lyrics and Songs for Music:"—the latter lady, too, was a zealous and disinterested counsellor and comforter: it was chiefly at her instance that Mrs. Hemans made trial of the neighbourhood of Liverpool as a residence.

The state of Mrs. Hemans' mind—as yet struggling without the threshold of its last and greatest change—is, I think, to be traced in the poems written by her during these three years, if I am not reasoning from memory rather than from inference. They are more exclusively and sadly individual (with the exception, perhaps, of the "Songs for Music") than any of her former works: they treat more undividedly of the deeper workings of a sensitive and tender, and yet high-toned spirit: they exhibit, to the utmost, its unquiet desire to penetrate the mysteries which on this side of the grave are not

penetrable: they point unceasingly to the wounds which the world inflicts, rarely to those which it heals. So aware were her friends of this disposition of her mind, prevailing almost to unhealthiness, that they urged her to throw herself upon some work, in the progress of which she should be obliged to forget, rather than embody, thoughts of so melancholy a hue. They urged her in vain: she would sometimes, it is true, playfully talk of writing a fairy masque:—what a charming and fanciful poem would this have been!—or she would linger for a moment on some historical æra or character, as if about to concentrate her powers round it—and again, and yet again, return to her own heart, not merely for her subjects, but also their colouring. One legend which she took up, (I believe from the German,) she was compelled to abandon in consequence of the injurious influence its contemplation exercised upon a frame so fragile as hers. This was the tale of an enchantress, who, to win and secure the love of a mortal, sacrifices

one of her supernatural gifts of power after another:—her wand first, then her magic girdle, then the talismanic diadem she wears,—last of all, her immortality. She is repaid by satiety—neglect—desertion.

During these three years, in proportion as Mrs. Hemans' love for, and understanding of, music increased, she indulged herself in the fascinating occupation of song-writing. Among many other sets of songs,*—some of which were set to music by her sister, the rest by different friends,—the "Peninsular Melodies" should be mentioned. The work failed, because many of the airs selected were so thoroughly *unvocal* as to render the adaptation of characteristic words impossible: some of the Zorzicos (an old Moorish melody) are as rapid and as untameable as the wildest bag-pipe tunes. The ease with which she wrote her songs amounted almost to the fluency of improvvisation. I remember being

* Further allusion to these will be found in a subsequent series of letters.

present when some words were returned to her, as being unsuitable for the particular melody to which she wished them adapted. She sat down, and in a few moments, by the insertion of as many lines as the original had at first contained, gave the verses an entirely different and very peculiar rhythm—and at once changed and completed the song without any verbiage being apparent in its language, or dislocation in its structure.

I may now proceed with the extracts from her familiar correspondence. The latest among them, it will be seen, refer to the journey into Scotland undertaken by her in the summer of the year 1829.

"My dear Sir,

"Having to send a messenger into the town, I return you, with many thanks, the tale by 'our esteemed friend,' William Howitt, which perhaps you may want. I think it possesses a good deal of originality, and I have read it with much interest. I could almost imagine he had

been pourtraying some features of *my* early life in his heroine's, which could scarcely have been more unfettered. Is that strong passion for intellectual beauty a happy or a mournful gift, when so out of harmony with the rest of our earthly lot? Sometimes I think of it in sadness, but oftener it seems to me as a sort of rainbow, made up of light and tears, yet still the pledge of happiness to come. How very beautiful are those letters of Lord Collingwood's to his family!—more *touchingly* so, I think, than even Reginald Heber's; for there is something in all those thoughts of hearth and home, and of the garden trees, and of the 'old summer-seat,' which, breathing as they do from amidst the far and lonely seas, affect us like an exile's song of his father-land. The letters to his wife brought strongly to my mind the poor Queen of Prussia's joyous exclamations in the midst of her last sufferings:—'Oh! how blessed is she who receives a letter such as this!' I am exceedingly obliged to you for making this delight-

ful book known to me. To be sure, his lordship does seem a little 'notional,' as the Americans call it, sometimes, on the subject of female education—now does he not?—geometry and the square-root—'O words of fear!'" . . . .

"My dear Sir,

"You will scarcely yet, I suppose, be collecting your materials for the ——; but as the enclosed piece has been some time destined for you, I may as well send it now. It was suggested by a relievo of Thorwaldsen's, which represents Night hushing a babe upon her bosom.* I received a most pathetic appeal, a

* The poem in question is the "Song of Night," afterwards published among the "Songs of the Affections." It is full of lofty imagery and striking contrast; and may perhaps be singled out as one of the best lyrics written by Mrs. Hemans about this time.

short time since, from ——, in behalf of a young lady, a friend of his, who had taken it

---

A few stanzas may be cited in corroboration of this judgment.

* * * *

I come with every star;
Making thy streams, that on their noon-day track,
Give but the moss, the reed, the lily back,
Mirrors of worlds afar.

* * * *

I come with mightier things!
Who calls me silent? I have many tones—
The dark skies thrill with low mysterious moans
Borne on my sweeping wings.

* * * *

I come with all my train:
Who calls me lonely?—Hosts around me tread,
The intensely bright, the beautiful, the dead,—
Phantoms of heart and brain!

* * * *

into her head to want some of my writing. I must transcribe some of his rhetoric for your admiration, and I am sure you will agree with me that it is enough 'to soften rocks:'—'Can you, dear madam, refuse this young, engaging girl, the daughter of ——, the pupil of ——, the friend of ——, the innocent gratification she thus timidly solicits?'—No, to be sure I could not; one must have had a heart of stone to resist such moving words, so away went the autograph." . . . . .

I, that with soft control,
Shut the dim violet, hush the woodland song,
I am the avenging one! the arm'd—the strong,
The searcher of the soul!

I that shower dewy light,
Through slumbering leaves, bring storms!—the tempest-birth
Of memory, thought, remorse:—Be holy, Earth!
I am the solemn Night!

"Jan. 1829.

. . . "I can well imagine the weariness and disgust with which a mind of intellectual tastes must be oppressed by the long days of 'work-day world' cares, so utterly at variance with such tastes; and yet, perhaps, the opposite extreme is scarcely more to be desired. Mine, I believe, has been *too much* a life of thought and feeling for health and peace: I *can* certainly quit this little world of my own for active duties; for however I may at times playfully advocate the cause of *weakness*, there is no one who has, with deeper need for *strength*, a fuller conviction of its necessity; but it is often by an effort, and a painful one, that I am enabled to obtain it." . . . .

---

* "My dear ——,

"I ought to have acknowledged both your kind notes ere now, and thanked you for the

copy of Moore's lines,* which are certainly more witty than elegant—perhaps the very coarseness from which one cannot help rather shrinking, renders the satire the more appropriate to its object. Do you remember that the other evening (which I assure you I enjoyed as much as you could have done) we were speaking of the pleasures of memory; and I thought they resembled those shadowy images of flowers which the alchymists of old believed they had the power of raising from the ashes of the plant? I send you a few lines† which that conversation suggested, and which, in consequence, will perhaps interest you. I do hope I shall be able to

* The satirical verses upon Leigh Hunt's Personal Reminiscences of Lord Byron.

† This was a lyric which appeared in one of the Annuals, beginning,

'Twas a dream of olden days
That art, with some strange power,
A visionary form could raise
From the ashes of a flower.

come to you on Saturday evening. . . . . But, generally speaking, I cannot tell you how painful going out is to me now; I know it is a weakness which I *must* conquer, but I feel so alone, so unprotected; and this weary celebrity makes such things, I believe, press the more bitterly.

"I hardly know why I should 'bestow my tediousness' upon you in this manner, only that I am just returned from a large party of strangers, in which feeling myself more alone than *when* alone, because there was no one who interested me in the least, I grew especially weary, duller than any pumpkin or 'fat weed' whatsoever, and exceedingly inclined to rush out of the room without any *congé* to host or guest. From this rash act, however, some sense of decorum restrained me, and so here I am, making amends to myself by pouring out my *ennui* upon your devoted head, which I will now spare any further infliction, as it is growing late enough to carry one's disgusts qui-

etly to bed. Good night, therefore, and believe me

"Affectionately yours,

"F. H."

. . . "I must also thank you for the very kind note which I received by little Henry: I was much better when it arrived. . . My complaint is indeed most pertinacious, if not hopeless, as I am assured, and indeed convinced, that it is caused by excitements, from which, unless I could win 'the wings of a dove and flee away' into a calmer atmosphere, there is no escape. I have therefore only to meet it as cheerily as I may—and there is a buoyant spirit yet unconquered, though often sorely shaken, within me.

"I trust I shall have the pleasure of seeing you here on the evening of the day which I have begged your sister to pass with me. Do you know that I have really succeeded in giving

something of beauty to the *suburban* court of my dwelling by the aid of the laburnums and rhododendrons, which I planted myself, and which I want you to see while they are so amiably flowering. But how soon the feeling of *home* throws light and loveliness over the most uninteresting spot! I am beginning to draw that feeling around me here, and consequently to be happier.

"Did you ever see a letter *with a symphony?* I call the enclosed, one of that class. After many and long wanderings, it reached me this morning with that awful Titanic poem the ——, the sight of which really renews all the terrors of 'Charlemagne.' . . . . .

"May I request you to present to your sister, with all possible oracular solemnity, the accompanying inestimable collection of aphorisms, particularly recommending to her notice 'the short miscellaneous sentences alphabetically digested, and easily to be retained in the memories of youth,' with which the work

closes. I shall expect her to have learned perfectly the two first pages for repetition the next time we visit the 'happy valley.' —— tells me, that you wished for the lines to the Rhine song, a copy of which I have now the pleasure of sending you.* In explanation of their very *pugnacious* character, I must mention that they were written at the request of my eldest brother, who wished them to commemorate the battles of his young days.

"Ever truly yours,

"F. H."

"I thought there was something which I wished to show you the other evening, but, as usual, I did not remember it until you were gone, and therefore send it now. It was Lockhart's description, in 'Peter's Letters,' of *our* cathedral, and also of the glorious Spanish

* The "English Soldier's Song of Memory," published among the "National Lyrics and Songs for Music."

churches, which his language arrays in such 'religious light,' that I know you will enjoy the passage with your whole heart. I also send my copy of the Iphigenia, because I shall like to know whether you are as much struck with all that I have marked in it as I have been. Do you remember all we were saying on the obscurity of *female* suffering on such stormy days of the lance and spear as the good Fray Agapida describes so vividly? Has not Goëthe beautifully developed the idea in the lines which I enclose? they occur in Iphigenia's supplication to Thoas for her brother." . . . . .

"Dear ———,

"I really should give you a lecture, if I did not know, from intimate conviction, how very useless a thing *wisdom* is in this world. But I wish you could keep down that feverish excitement, as it is so hurtful even to intellectual power, that I am convinced we have not more

than half command even of our *imaginative* faculties whilst under its influence. I want you to fix your heart and mind steadfastly on some point of excellence, and to go on pursuing it '*soberly*,' as Lady Grace says, and satisfying yourself with the deep consciousness that you *are* making way. I know this may be, dear ——, because it was my own case, with feelings excitable as you know mine are, and amidst all things that could most try and distract them. I send you a little collection of stories which I made about two years ago, and amongst which I think you might, perhaps, find some *matériel*. . . . I almost think I would recommend the *Kunstroman*, to be deferred till you know German.

"Ever yours very sincerely,

"F. H."

Dated from Seacombe.*

* "I hope you have not staid in for me this morning, my dear ——, and I hope your brother did not wait long, as he had kindly promised to do, for my landing. I had fully intended to be with you a little after twelve, but neither steam-packet nor sail-boat was attainable: the whole Seacombe fleet was gone to convoy some vessels down the river. I crossed the water at last, between one and two, with some thoughts of proceeding to —— street; but the pier was crowded with shaggy *Orson-looking* men, and I, having only little Charles with me, really had not resolution to effect a landing. I must return home on Saturday, having much to arrange before my flight to Scotland, and I now write to ask if you could come over here to-morrow should the weather be fine, and pass the day with me? There really are some pretty dells and *bournes* about here, though you would not

* A suburban bathing-place on the Cheshire side of the Mersey.

imagine it, and I should very much enjoy a quiet walk with you, therefore if you can come, do let it be earlier than the last time. There will be an outpouring of spirit of *Pumpkinism* upon me the moment I get back, and I shall not have half the pleasure in seeing you there amidst the interruptions we generally have; it is quite delightful to know that a river broad and deep is flowing between one's-self and the *foe*. . . . . Will you give the enclosed to —— with my kind remembrance? tell him he must not feel any 'compunctious visitings' on receiving it, because I have reserved quite as much as I shall want, for a brooch in which I mean to wear it; I do not know any one who can value it more than he will, and I have no sort of pleasure in keeping a relic all to myself.

"Were you not astonished to hear of the sudden spirit of enterprise which took possession of me when I determined to visit Chiefswood? I really begin to feel rather *Mimosa-like*

when I contemplate the desperate undertaking a little more closely. How I do wish you were going with me!"

The relic in question was a small lock of Lord Byron's hair; the brooch which contained the portion reserved for herself was one of her favourite ornaments till the Memoirs of the poet appeared. An illustrative trait or two which have reference to these may be here introduced, though chronologically out of place. Some idea of the extraordinary power and clearness of her memory may be conveyed by the fact, that, after having heard those beautiful stanzas addressed to his sister by Lord Byron—which afterwards appeared in print—read aloud twice in manuscript, she repeated them to us, and even wrote them down with a surprising accuracy. On two lines, I recollect, she dwelt with particular emphasis,—

"There are yet two things in my destiny,
A world to roam o'er, and a home with thee."

Her anxiety to see the memoirs was extreme,—her disappointment at the extracts which appeared in the periodicals so great as to prevent her reading the work when published. "The book itself," says she, in one of her notes, "I do not mean to read; I feel as if it would be like entering a tavern, and I shall not cross the threshold." She found the poet whom she had long admired at a distance invested with a Mephistopheles-like character which pained and startled her; for the unworldly and imaginative life she had led, rendered her slow to admit and unwilling to tolerate the strange mixture of cruel mockery and better feeling, which breathe through so many of his letters; and the details of his continental wanderings shocked her fastidious sense as exceeding the widest limits within which one so passionate and so disdainful of law and usage might err and be forgiven. From this time forth she never wore

the relic; indeed, her shrinking from any thing like coarseness of thought, or feeling, or language, (which will be traced in the following note,) may by some be thought to trench upon affectation, whereas it was only the necessary consequence of her exclusive and unchecked devotion to the Beautiful. If any passage in one of her most favourite writers offended her delicacy, the leaf was torn out without remorse; and every one familiar with her little library will have been stopped by many a pause and chasm, of which this is the explanation.

* "My dear ——,

"Upon looking over the dramatic specimens which I had promised to send you, I was distressed to find the *titles* of some of the plays so very coarse, though the scenes have been carefully chosen, that I really did not like to forward you the book. If, however, you do not take alarm at 'the word of fear,' *Lectures*, I think you will find in the accompanying volume

of Hazlitt's a great deal that is interesting, and many selections from those olden poets which will give you an idea of their force and sweetness 'drawn from that well of English *undefiled*.'" . . . . .

CHAPTER II.

Mrs. Hemans' visit to Scotland—Her funereal poetry—Her reception in Edinburgh—Anecdotes—Letters from Chiefswood—The Rhymour's Glen—Walk with Sir Walter Scott—The Rhine Song—"Yarrow visited"—Lines to Rizzio's picture—Letter from Abbotsford—Visit of the Duc de Chartres—Anecdotes—Letters from Edinburgh—Moonlight walk—Scotch pulpit eloquence—Visit to Mackenzie—Remarkable group of sculpture—Letter from Milburn Tower.

It was early in the summer of 1829, that Mrs. Hemans, urged by numerous invitations, visited Scotland, accompanied by her two youngest sons. This was the first of the only two periods, during which she was received and distinguished

as a guest by those, personally strangers to her, whom the interest inspired by her works had made her friends. Mrs. Hemans' name, indeed, was singularly popular in Scotland; she had written some of her best poems for its principal literary periodical, Blackwood's Magazine; she was already regarded as a friend in more than one noble house, from having been summoned in times of affliction to perform those melancholy, but soothing offices for the dead, which survivors could only entrust to one as genuine in feeling as she was delicate in expression.*

* Mrs. Hemans' funereal poems are among her most impressive works: the music of her verse, through which an under-current of sadness may always be traced, was never more happily employed than in lamenting the beloved and early called, or in bidding

"Hope to the world to look beyond the tombs."

I need only mention a few lyrics, "The Farewell to the Dead," (in the Lays of Many Lands;) "The

The events and pleasures of this Scottish journey will be found pleasantly described in the following letters, which were written under the immediate impulse of the moment, and in the artlessness of perfect confidence. An

Exile's Dirge," (in the Songs of the Affections;) "The Burial of an Emigrant's Child in the Forest," (in the "Scenes and Hymns of Life;") and the "Burial in the Desert," a noble poem, published among her poetical remains. The introduction of the two following stanzas of a more concise and monumental character, though they have already appeared in print, will not, I am sure, be objected to, as illustrating the above remark.

INSCRIPTION FOR A TOMB.

Earth! guard what here we lay in holiest trust;
That which hath left our home a darkened place,
Wanting the form, the smile now veiled with dust,
The light departed with our loveliest face!
Yet from thy bonds our sorrow's hope is free,
We have but *lent* our beautiful to thee!

anecdote or two may be added to bear out the occasional references to the honours and humours of *lionism* which they contain. Mrs. Hemans had scarcely arrived in Edinburgh, when her name being recognised at her hotel, a plentiful bouquet of flowers was brought into her room, nor could any welcome have been devised half so acceptable as this to one who used gaily to call one of the long graceful branches of the Convallaria (Solomon's seal) "her sceptre," and whose passion for flowers (the word is not too strong) increased with every year of her life.*

But thou, O Heaven! keep, keep what thou hast taken,
And with our treasure keep our hearts on high!
The spirit weak, and yet by pain unshaken,
The faith, the love, the lofty constancy.
Guide us where *these* are with our sister flown,
They were of thee, and thou hast claimed thine own!

---

* "I really think that pure passion for flowers is the only one which long sickness leaves untouched

She would tell too, with infinite humour, how she had been abruptly accosted in the castle garden by an unknown lady, who approached her "under the assurance of an internal sympathy that she must be Mrs. Hemans." Another, whose own literary reputation was not inconsiderable, when introduced to her, fancifully asked, "whether a bat might be allowed to appear in the presence of a nightingale." An anecdote, too, has appeared in one of the Edinburgh Journals, which is worth recording. After a visit paid by Mrs. Hemans to the sanctum of a courtly bibliopole of the modern Athens, he was asked by some friend whether he had

with its chilling influences. Often during this weary illness of mine have I looked upon new books with perfect apathy, when, if a friend has sent me a few flowers, my heart has leaped up to their dreamy hues and odours with a sudden sense of renovated childhood, which seems to me one of the mysteries of our being." *Mrs. Hemans to Mrs. Lawrence from Redesdale, near Dublin,* 1835.

yet chanced to see the most distinguished English poetess of the day. "He made no answer," continues the narrator, "but taking me by the arm in solemn silence, led me into the back parlour, where stood a chair in the centre of the room, isolated from the rest of the furniture; and, pointing to it, said, with the profoundest reverence, in a low earnest tone, 'There *she* sat, sir, on that chair.'"

After a few days' stay in Edinburgh, Mrs. Hemans proceeded to Roxburghshire, whence the following letters are dated. It is hardly necessary to say that Chiefswood, the residence of the accomplished author of Cyril Thornton, with whom she had long maintained a correspondence, is in the immediate neighbourhood of Melrose and Abbotsford.

"Chiefswood, July 13.

* "How I wish you were within reach of a *post*, like our most meritorious Saturday's Messenger, my dear ———. Amidst all these new

scenes and new people I want so much to talk to you all! At present I *can* only talk of Sir Walter Scott, with whom I have been just taking a long, delightful walk through the 'Rhymour's Glen.' I came home, to be sure, in rather a disastrous state after my adventure, and was greeted by my maid, with that most disconsolate visage of hers, which invariably moves my hard heart to laughter; for I had got wet above my ancles in the haunted burn, torn my gown in making my way through thickets of wild roses, stained my gloves with wood-strawberries, and even—direst misfortune of all! scratched my face with a *rowan* branch. But what of all this? Had I not been walking with Sir Walter Scott, and listening to tales of elves and bogles and brownies, and hearing him recite some of the Spanish ballads till they 'stirred the heart like the sound of a trumpet?' I must reserve many of these things to tell you when we meet, but one very *important* trait, (since it proves a sympathy between the Great

Unknown and myself,) I cannot possibly defer to that period, but must record it now. You will expect something peculiarly impressive, I have no doubt. Well—we had reached a rustic seat in the wood, and were to rest there, but I, out of pure perverseness, chose to establish myself comfortably on a grass bank. 'Would it not be more prudent for you, Mrs. Hemans,' said Sir Walter, 'to take the seat?' 'I have no doubt that it would, Sir Walter, but, somehow or other, I always prefer the grass.' 'And so do I,' replied the dear old gentleman, coming to sit there beside me, 'and I really believe that I do it chiefly out of a wicked wilfulness, because all my *good advisers* say that it will give me the rheumatism.' Now was it not delightful? I mean for the future to take exactly my own way in all matters of this kind, and to say that Sir Walter Scott particularly recommended me to do so. I was rather agreeably surprised by his appearance, after all I had heard of its homeliness; the predominant ex-

pression of countenance, is, I think, a sort of arch good-nature, conveying a mingled impression of penetration and benevolence. The portrait in the last year's Literary Souvenir is an excellent likeness. . . . . .

"Chiefswood, July 13th.

"Will you not be alarmed at the sight of another portentous-looking letter, and that so soon again? But I have passed so happy a morning in exploring the 'Rhymour's Glen' with Sir Walter Scott, that, following my first impulse on returning, I must communicate to you the impression of its pleasant hours, in full confidence that while they are yet fresh upon my mind, I shall thus impart to you something of my own enjoyment. Was it not delightful to ramble through the fairy ground of the hills, with the 'mighty master' himself for a guide. up wild and rocky paths, over rude bridges, and along bright windings of the little haunted

stream, which fills the whole ravine with its voice? I wished for you so often! There was only an old countryman with us, upon whom Sir Walter is obliged to lean for support in such wild walks, so I had his conversation for several hours quite to myself, and it was in perfect harmony with the spirit of the deep and lonely scene; for he told me old legends, and repeated snatches of mountain ballads, and showed me the spot where Thomas of Ercildoune

'Was aware of a lady fair,
Came riding down the glen,'

which lady was no other than the fairy queen, who bore him away to her own mysterious land. We talked too of signs and omens, and strange sounds in the wind, and 'all things wonderful and wild;' and he described to me some gloomy cavern scenes which he had explored on the northern coast of Scotland, and mentioned his having heard the deep foreboding murmur of

storms in the air, on those lonely shores, for hours and hours before the actual bursting of the tempest. We stopped in one spot which I particularly admired; the stream fell there down a steep bank into a little rocky basin overhung with mountain ash, and Sir Walter Scott desired the old peasant to make a seat there, kindly saying to me, 'I like to associate the names of my friends and those who interest me, with natural objects and favourite scenes, and this shall be called Mrs. Hemans' seat.' But how I wished you could have heard him describe a glorious sight which had been witnessed by a friend of his, the crossing the Rhine at Ehrenbreistein, by the German army of Liberators on their return from victory. 'At the first gleam of the river,' he said, 'they all burst forth into the national chaunt '*Am Rhein, am Rhein!*' They were two days passing over, and the rocks and the castle were ringing to the song the whole time, for each band renewed it while crossing, and the Cossacks with the clash and the clang,

and the roll of their stormy war-music, catching the enthusiasm of the scene, swelled forth the chorus '*Am Rhein, am Rhein!*' I shall never forget the words, nor the look, nor the tone, with which he related this;* it came upon me suddenly, too, like that noble burst of warlike melody from the Edinburgh Castle rock, and I could not help answering it in his own words,

'Twere worth ten years of peaceful life,
One glance at their array.'

"I was surprised when I returned to Chiefswood to think that I had been conversing so

* Upon this anecdote Mrs. Hemans afterwards based one of the most spirited of her national lyrics, "The Rhine Song of the German Soldiers after Victory." The effect of this when sung with a single voice and chorus, is most stately and exciting. The air had never before been mated with suitable words; the German *Trink-lied,* (drinking song,) which belongs to it in the original, falls far behind the music, which is high-toned and spirited.

freely and fearlessly with Sir Walter Scott, as with a friend of many days, and this at our first interview too! for he is only just returned to Abbotsford and came to call upon me this morning, when the cordial greeting he gave me to Scotland, made me at once feel a sunny influence in his society. . . . . I am going to dine at Abbotsford to-morrow—how you would delight in the rich baronial-looking hall there, with the deep-toned coloured light, *brooding* upon arms and armorial bearings, and the fretted roof imitating the faëry sculpture of Melrose in its flower-like carvings! Rizzio's beautiful countenance has not yet taken its calm clear eyes from my imagination; the remembrance has given rise to some lines, which I will send you when I write next. There is a sad *fearful* picture of Queen Mary in the Abbotsford dining-room. But I will release you from further description for *this* time, and say farewell.

"Ever faithfully yours,

"F. H."

. . . . . .

"I really have been careless in not saying to you anything on the subject of my health . . . . . but besides that I fear I must plead guilty to never thinking about the matter when I wrote to you, I could not have said any thing *then* which would have given you much pleasure, as I suffered much for several days after my arrival here from those strange attacks of sudden palpitation of the heart. They have, however, been much less frequent during the last week: but how is it possible for such an aspen-leaf as myself, constantly trembling to the *rush* of some quick feeling, ever to be well? I sometimes enjoy a buoyancy both of frame and spirit, which, though fitful, is the utmost I can ever hope. . . . . Thanks for your kind reception of my little sketch—the brother or sister of which in my present packet hopes for as cordial a greeting—I find I have not left myself room to send you the lines upon Rizzio, but I feel so instantaneous an impulse to communicate

to you whatever interests me, that I *know* I shall write from Abbotsford, and I will send them then. You are quite right; it *was* the description of that noble Rhine scene which interested me more than any part of Sir Walter's conversation, and I wished more that you could have heard it, than all the high legends and solemn scenes of which we spoke that day." . . . .

" Chiefswood, July 20th.

" Whether I shall return to you all 'brighter and happier,' as your letter so kindly prophecies, I know not: but I think there is every prospect of my returning more fitful and wilful than ever; for here I am leading my own free native life of the hills again, and if I could but bring some of my friends, as the old ballads says, 'near, near, *near* me,' I should indeed enjoy it; but that strange solitary feeling which I cannot chase away, comes over me too often like a dark sudden

shadow, bringing with it an utter indifference to all things around. I lose it most frequently, however, in the excitement of Sir Walter Scott's society. And with him I am now in constant intercourse, taking long walks over moor and woodland, and listening to song and legend of other times, until my mind quite forgets itself, and is carried wholly back to the days of the Slogan and the fiery cross, and the wild gatherings of border chivalry. I cannot say enough of his cordial kindness to me; it makes me feel when at Abbotsford, as if the stately rooms of the proud ancestral-looking place, were old familiar scenes to me. Yesterday he made a party to show me the 'pleasant banks of Yarrow,' about ten miles from hence: I went with him in an open carriage, and the day was lovely, smiling upon us with a *real blue* sunny sky, and we passed through I know not how many storied spots, and the spirit of the master-mind seemed to call up sudden pictures from every knoll and cairn as we went by—so vivid were his descrip-

tions of the things that had been. The *names* of some of those scenes had, to be sure, rather savage sounds; such as '*Slain Man's Lea*,' '*Dead Man's Pool*,' &c., &c.; but I do not know whether these strange titles did not throw a deeper interest over woods and waters now so brightly peaceful. We passed one meadow on which Sir Walter's grandfather had been killed in a duel;* 'had it been a century earlier,' said he, 'a bloody feud would have been transmitted to me, as Spaniards bequeath a game of chess to be finished by their children.' And I do think, that had *he* lived in those earlier days, no man would have more enjoyed what Sir Lucius O'Trigger is pleased to call '*a pretty quarrel*;' the whole expression of his benevolent countenance changes if he has but to speak of the dirk or the claymore: you see the spirit

* A notice appeared in one of the periodicals of 1835, alluding to this letter, which was published in the Athenæum, for the purpose of correcting this statement. I regret that, after much search, I have not been able to find it.

that would 'say amidst the trumpets, ha! ha!' suddenly flashing from his gray eyes, and sometimes, in repeating a verse of warlike minstrelsy, he will spring up as if he sought the sound of a distant gathering cry. But I am forgetting beautiful Yarrow, along the banks of which we walked through the Duke of Buccleugh's grounds, under old rich patrician trees; and at every turn of our path, the mountain stream seemed to assume a new character, sometimes lying under steep banks in dark transparence, sometimes

> 'crested with tawny foam,
> Like the mane of a chestnut steed.'

And there was Sir Walter beside me, repeating, with a tone of feeling as deep as if *then* only first wakened—

> 'They sought him east, they sought him west,
> They sought him far with wail and sorrow;
> There was nothing seen but the coming night,
> And nothing heard but the roar of Yarrow.'

It was all like a dream. Do you remember Wordsworth's beautiful poem 'Yarrow visited?' I was ready to exclaim, in its opening words—'And is this Yarrow?'—There was nothing to disturb the deep and often solemn loveliness of the scenery: no *rose-coloured* spencers such as persecuted the unhappy Count Forbin amidst the pyramids—Mr. Hamilton, and Mrs. Lockhart, and the boys, who followed us, were our whole party; and the sight of shepherds, real, not Arcadian shepherds, sleeping under their plaids to shelter from the noon-day, carried me at once into the heart of a pastoral and mountain country. We visited Newark tower, where, amongst other objects that awakened many thoughts, I found the name of Mungo Park, (who was a native of the Yarrow vale,) which he had inscribed himself, shortly before leaving his own bright river never to return. We came back to Abbotsford, where we were to pass the remainder of the day, partly along the Ettrick, and partly *through* the Tweed; on the way, we

were talking of trees, in his love for which, Sir Walter is a perfect Evelyn. I mentioned to him what I once spoke of to you, the different sounds they give forth to the wind,* which he had ob-

* . . . 'The arrowy spire
Of the lone cypress—as of wood-girt fane,
Rests dark and still amid a heaven of fire.
The pine gives forth its odours, and the lake
Gleams like one ruby, and the soft winds wake,
Till every string of Nature's solemn lyre
Is touched to answer; its most secret tone
Drawn from each tree, for each hath whispers all its own.'

Forest Sanctuary, Canto ii. verse 72.

Many other happy and distinctive allusions to the sounds of the trees will be remembered by every one who is familiar with Mrs. Hemans' works. She was, indeed, peculiarly sensitive to the significance of natural sound. "If I were an enchantress," says she, in one of her letters, "I would certainly put a spell and a voice in all the trees, and streams, and flowers, and make them say the prettiest things imaginable about me to those in whom I am interested."

served, and he asked me if I did not think that an union of music and poetry, varying in measure and expression, might in some degree imitate or represent those 'voices of the trees;' and he described to me some highland music of a similar imitative character, called the 'notes of the sea-birds'—barbaric notes truly they must be!—In the evening we had a good deal of music: he is particularly fond of national airs, and I played him many, for which I wish you had heard how kindly and gracefully he thanked me. But, O! the bright swords! I must not forget to tell you how I sat, like Minna in the Pirate, (though *she* stood or moved, I believe,) the very 'queen of swords.' I have the strongest love for the flash of glittering steel—and Sir Walter brought out I know not how many gallant blades to show me; one which had fought at Killicrankie, and one which had belonged to the young Prince Henry, James the First's son, and one which looked of as noble race and temper as that with which Cœur de Lion severed the

block of steel in Saladin's tent. What a number of things I have yet to tell you! I feel sure that my greatest pleasure from all these new objects of interest will arise from talking them over with you when I return. I hope you have received my letter with an account of the 'Rhymour's Glen,' and the little drawing of Chiefswood, for which I now send you a *pendant* in one of Abbotsford, which is, at least, recommended by its fidelity. . . . . Pray do not let me be forgotten amongst you while I am far away. I have always the strangest fear of being forgotten.

"Ever faithfully yours,

"F. H."

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* "Thanks, many thanks, my dear ——, for your kind and welcome letter. You do not know how much I am cheered always by the sight of a packet from —— street. . . . But away with all these ominous thoughts, for

the sun—yes, indeed, in spite of all your brother's *southron* sauciness—a real Scottish sun is shining cheerily, and the little burn glancing brightly past—and, better than all—I think Sir Walter will be here this morning, and then I shall go and walk with him through the Rhymour's Glen, or the 'Hexel's Cleuch,' (which means, as he tells me, the Witch's Dell,) or by some of his own woods, which he so loves and delights in. I am going to Abbotsford for some days on Saturday, and expect to carry away many delightful recollections and tales to tell by the fireside when I return to you all. . . . . How I wish I could give you some idea of —— whom I have heard preach—how he dives, with an actual *bodily* diving, down into the abysses of his sermon, to fish up an argument; and how he nails the argument, with a resolute Jael-like gesture to the pulpit, when fairly caught—and how he complimenteth me, after a most solemn and delectable fashion. . . . All this must be matter for the discussion of future evening hours.

Nathless, let me not forget to tell you now, lest, peradventure, it should escape me, how, in discoursing upon the various excellencies of that somewhat overrated insect, the ant, he exhorted his hearers to look upon 'that *gifted individual*,' and take pattern by her virtues. . . .

"I am afraid I must give up the idea of ascending the Eildon Hill, though I have really felt better within the last ten days; those violent breathings of the heart have been much less frequent; but I have ominous warnings of them whenever I over-exert myself. I have written your brother a long account of a day I passed on the banks of lovely Yarrrow. I hope he has received it long ere this. Now farewell for the present—in the house I cannot remain one moment longer,

"Ever your very affectionate

"F. H."

TO A REMEMBERED PICTURE.*

They haunt me still—those calm, pure, holy eyes!
Their piercing sweetness wanders thro' my dreams:
The soul of music that within them lies,
Comes o'er *my* soul in soft and sudden gleams:
Life—spirit-life—immortal and divine,
Is there—and yet how dark a death was thine!

Could it—oh! *could* it be—meek child of song?
The might of gentleness on that fair brow—
Was the celestial gift no shield from wrong?
Bore it no talisman to ward the blow?
Ask if a flower, upon the billows cast,
Might brave their strife—a flute-note hush the blast?

Are there not deep sad oracles to read
In the clear stillness of that radiant face?
Yes, ev'n like *thee* must gifted spirits bleed,
Thrown on a world, for heavenly things no place!
Bright exiled birds that visit alien skies,
Pouring on storms their suppliant melodies.

* I have departed from my original plan in quoting one of Mrs. Hemans' poems entire:—it was necessary, in the present instance, for the clear understanding of the following letter.

And seeking ever some true, gentle breast,
Whereon their trembling plumage might repose,
And their free song-notes, from that happy nest,
Gush as a fount that forth from sunlight flows;
Vain dream! the love whose precious balms might save
Still, still denied:—they struggle to the grave.

Yet my heart shall not sink!—another doom,
Victim! hath set its promise in thine eye;
A light is there, too quenchless for the tomb,
Bright earnest of a nobler destiny.
Telling of answers, in some far-off sphere,
To the deep souls that find no echo here.

"Abbotsford, — 26.

"I believe I have embodied in these lines my idea, not only of Rizzio's fate, but of Mary's: you, I recollect, thought the latter rather an imaginary view, and it may well be; for I have so often found a kind of relief in throwing the colouring of my own feelings over the destiny of historical characters, that it has almost become

a habit of my mind. . . . . But how *can* I go on thus, speaking of myself, *here* in this faëry realm of Abbotsford?—with so many relics of the chivalrous past around me, and the presiding spirit which has gathered them together still shedding out its own brightness over all! I have now had the gratification of seeing him in every point of view I could desire: we had one of the French princes here yesterday, with his suite;—the Duc de Chartres, son of the Duc d'Orleans;—and there was naturally some little excitement diffused through the household by the arrival of a royal guest: Sir Walter was, however, exactly the same in his own manly simplicity;—kind, courteous, unaffected; '*his foot upon his native heath.*' I must say a few words of the Duc, who is a very elegant young man, possessing a finished and really *noble* grace of manner, which conveys at once the idea of Sir Philip Sidney's high thoughts seated 'in a heart of courtesy,' and which one likes to consider as an *appanage* of royal blood. I was a

little nervous when Sir Walter handed me to the piano, on which I was the sole performer, for the delectation of the courtly party. *Son Altesse Royale* made a most exemplary listener; but my discovery that he was pleased to consider one of Count Oginski's polonaises as a *variation* upon that beautiful slow movement of Hummel's which you copied for me, and which is one of my especial favourites, very much neutralized the effect which his '*paroles d'or et de soie*' might otherwise have had upon my dazzled intellect. To-day, Lord —— is expected, with his eldest son, here called the 'Master of ——.' How completely that title brings back Ravenswood and Lucy Ashton to one's imagination! If the 'Master' have not something of the stately Edgar about him, I shall be rather disappointed. . . . . I am so glad you are going on so diligently with Spanish, and anticipate so much pleasure from your further acquaintance with the beautiful Letrillas and romances I have collected myself.

I have never had any companion in my Spanish studies, or any person who has taken the least interest in them before,—so that you will be the only friend associated with them in my recollection. I suppose these Abbotsford pens are all spoiled by the Waverley novels. I am really 'a woman to be pitied' for the one with which I write, and your lot in reading will not be much more enviable." . . .

Mrs. Hemans returned from Abbotsford filled with grateful recollections of the kindness she had received within its walls, and of her intercourse with its master—as frank and simple-hearted as he was richly-gifted beyond the rest of his race. Some of his antiquarian treasures took a strong hold of her imagination; in particular, that picture of Mary Stuart which was painted after her execution; nor had she dwelt so long within the magician's precincts without having gathered up some of his legends. I re-

member her repeating, with great effect, the tradition of the Wild Huntsman being heard in the streets of Valenciennes shortly before the battle of Waterloo, which he had told her. Her mind was thoroughly awakened and kindled by this visit, to which she referred as one of the brightest passages of her life. She might well say, in one of her letters, "I shall bring with me many bright recollections from Scotland, and hope they will be the means of adding enjoyment to your fireside also."

Little more remains to be told of Mrs. Hemans' sojourn at Abbotsford. To one of her sons, however, who was her companion in this interesting visit, I am indebted for an anecdote or two, which complete the picture. "She used to spend the mornings chiefly in taking long walks or drives with Sir Walter; in the evenings she used to play to him,* principally her sister's

* "I have marked all the music in my book which Sir Walter particularly enjoys; the 'Rhine Song' is

music, and sometimes sing—(for at an earlier age, when her health was strong, she had possessed a very good voice)—and I remember his saying to her, on one of these occasions, 'One would say you had too many accomplishments, Mrs. Hemans, were they not all made to give pleasure to those around you!' He was affected to tears by her reading aloud a little French poem, describing the sufferings of the Bourbons in the Conciergerie, and begged her to discontinue . . . . I never heard Sir Walter make any allusion to his own fame, except on one occasion when we visited Newark Tower, and, on seing two tourists make a precipitate retreat at our approach, he said, smiling,—'Ah, Mrs. Hemans, they little know what two lions they're running away from!'"

Further letters of the same series contain

one of his very great favourites, and a 'Cancionella Espanola' another: and of the 'Captive Knight' he is never weary."—*From a letter.*

accounts of Mrs. Hemans' visits to Hawthornden, Roslin, and other equally celebrated scenes of Scottish song and story. After she left Abbotsford, she paid several visits to noble houses, and I regret much that I have been unable to find a letter, one of her liveliest, written from Hopetoun House, in which was described, with inimitable grace and liveliness, an adventure in a haunted chamber belonging to that mansion—a tapestried chamber, too: how she had retired to her pillow, conjuring up a thousand weird and shadowy images, till she became almost afraid of the phantoms of her own imagination; and when she looked round the room, started at the fantastic figures on the walls:—how, in the true heroine style, she must needs rise and examine these by the light of her taper;—when lo! instead of prince or paladin or bearded magician with fatal eyes, the object of her fear proved a Jemmy Jessamy shepherd, tranquilly plucking cherries in a tree, for the benefit of some equally Arcadian Silvi or Corisca below.

The three letters which follow were written upon her return to Edinburgh.

"Albyn Place, Edinburgh, August 21st.

"I hope you have not felt anxious on account of my silence, which, indeed, has been unusually long; but for several days after I last wrote, I was so languid, from over-fatigue, that I could only '*think to you*,' as I always do when any thing interests me. I am now better again, having been allowed a little more repose, and finding myself much more protected in Lady ——'s house (where I have passed the last fortnight) from the *inconveniences of celebrity*, which, to me, are often painfully oppressive. I cannot tell you how very welcome your letters are to me; how much they always seem to bring me back of pure and home-feeling—'the cup of water,' for which my spirit pines in the midst of excitement and adulation, and to which I turn from all else that is offered me, as I would to a place of shelter from the noon-day. . . . I

have lost the Castle now, and its martial music, being removed to a much less inspiring part of the town; but a few nights ago, I made a party to walk through some of the most beautiful streets by moonlight. We went along Prince's-street to the foot of the Calton Hill, and gazed down upon Holyrood, lying so dark and still in its desolateness, and forming so strong a contrast to the fair pillars of the Hill, which looked more pure and aërial than ever as they rose against the moonlight sky. '*Mais qu'ils se passent des orâges du fond du cœur!*' and how little can those around one form an idea from outward signs of what may be overshadowing the inner world of the heart! Such a sense of strangeness and loneliness came suddenly over me, surrounded as I was, amidst all this dusky magnificence, by acquaintance of yesterday. I felt as if all I loved were so far, far removed from me, that I could have burst into tears from the rush of this unaccountable emotion. Had I possessed any power of '*gramarye*,' you would certainly

have found yourself all of a sudden transported through the air. I am sure you would have enjoyed the scene, with all its bold outlines, gleaming lights, and massy shadows. . . . . Since I last wrote to you, I have been hearing —— preach, and am almost ashamed to tell you of the sense of disappointment I brought away with me. I really went prepared to yield up my whole spirit to the powers of his genius —but, alas, for my fastidious taste! With every disposition, with indeed the most anxious desire to be wholly subdued, I *could not* overcome the effect of his most untuneful voice, plebeian aspect, and dialect, illustrating Shakspeare's idea of having been 'at a feast of languages and brought away the scraps,'—the scraps of all that you can imagine most coarse and repelling. I was really angry with myself to find that the preacher's evidently deep conviction, and unquestioned powers of thought, could never quell within me that provoking sense of the ludicrous which this 'scrannel-

pipe' of a voice and barbaric accent perpetually excited. I have just returned with much more pleasing impressions from visiting a fine collection of pictures, in which a Magdalen of Guido's, with the fervent expression of the up-raised eye, and the desolate flow of the long hair, particularly struck me, and brought to recollection some passages of our favourite 'Correggio.' I hope I shall have an interesting visit to describe to you when I write again, as Mr. Mackenzie, 'the Man of Feeling,' who is now very old and infirm, has sent to beg I would come and see him." . . . .

"I have just returned from paying the visit I mentioned, to old Mr. Mackenzie, and have been exceedingly interested. He is now very infirm, and his powers of mind are often much affected by the fitfulness of nervous indisposition; so that his daughter, who introduced me to his sitting-room, said very mournfully as we

entered, 'You will see but the wreck of my father.' However, on my making some allusion, after his first kind and gentle reception of me, to the 'men of other times' with whom he had lived in such brilliant association, it was really like the effect produced on the Last Minstrel,—

> '—when he caught the measure wild,
> The old man raised his face, and smiled,
> And lighted up his faded eye ;'

for he became immediately excited, and all his furrowed countenance seemed kindling with recollections of a race gone by. It was singular to hear anecdotes of Hume, and Robertson, and Gibbon, and the other intellectual 'giants of old,' from one who had mingled with their minds in familiar converse. I felt as if carried back at least a century.

"'Ah!' said he, half playfully, half sadly, 'there were *men* in Scotland then!' I could not help thinking of the story of 'Ogier the Dane,' —do you recollect his grasping the iron crow of

the peasant who broke into his sepulchre and exclaiming, 'It is well! there are men in Denmark still.' Poor Miss Mackenzie was so much affected by the sudden and almost unexpected awakening of her father's mind, that on leaving the room with me, she burst into tears, and was some time before she could conquer her strong emotion. I hope to have another interview with this delightful old man before I leave Edinburgh."

"8, Albyn Place, Edinburgh, August 26th, 1829.

. . . "I have now quite given up the idea of returning home by the lakes, as the weather is so very unpromising, and I do not feel myself equal to the fatigue of so much travelling by coaches. . . . . Since I last wrote I have become acquainted with Mr. ———, with whose works you are probably familiar, and have heard him

preach; the general impression was a very delightful one, the more so, perhaps, as my fastidious taste had been so much disturbed by ———, that it really was glad to *repose* upon Mr. ———'s venerable countenance, graceful manner, and gentle earnestness of voice;—there is something of classic elegance about him forming as strong a contrast to the harsher style of the Scotch kirk as a Doric temple would to the grim bleakness of a Methodist chapel. There is a tone of refinement in his conversation which quite answers the expectations awakened by his manner in the pulpit; indeed, his 'courtly grace' is rather *against* him here; for my part, I must own I found its effect very '*comfortable*.' I wished for you yesterday when I went to visit a fine colossal group of sculpture, Ajax bearing away the body of Patroclus, which has just been completed by an Edinburgh artist, and is exciting much interest here. Its effect, standing as it does quite alone in the midst of a large hall

hung with dark crimson, is exceedingly imposing; and the contrast of life and death in the forms of the combating and the departed warrior, struck me as full of power and thought. The *men* of hats and *great coats* who were standing round it looked so mean and insignificant, that I quite longed to blow them away, and to surround the heroic vision with a stately solitude. I always forgot to send an inscription which I copied for you from a silver urn at Abbotsford sent by Lord Byron to Sir Walter Scott. I though it might interest you, and enclose it now." . . .

In the next letter of the series, Mrs. Hemans alludes to the bust executed by Mr. Angus Fletcher, whilst she was on a visit to her friend Sir Robert Liston, which, as a graceful and faithful work of art, deserves an especial mention, no less than for its being the only model taken

of her features. Few celebrated authors, indeed, have caused so little spoliation of canvass or marble as Mrs. Hemans. She never sat for her picture willingly, and the play of her features was so quick and changeful, as to render the artist's task difficult almost to impossibility.

" Milburn Tower.

" Instead of requiring you to be 'made of apologies,'—dear cousin ——— 'I really think you are too kind in writing to me again after leaving your former letter so long unanswered. I am very glad you are returned home, as I look for much delight from meeting you all together once more after my wanderings. I began to think some little time since that I really never *should* disentangle myself from the 'wily Scotchmen.' After many struggles, however, I have at last extricated myself, and hope to be with you all again in the course of a very few days; and if it were not for the thoughts of returning to friends

so kind and dear, I might well regret leaving the land where I have been so warmly welcomed. Will you give my kind love to your sister, with thanks for her interesting letter, and tell her that sitting for a bust, awful as it may sound, is by no means an infliction so terrible as sitting for a picture; the sculptor allows much greater liberty of action, as every part of the head and form is necessary to *his* work. My *effigy* is now nearly completed, and is thought to be a performance of much talent: it is so very graceful that I cannot but accuse the artist of flattery, the only fault he has given me any reason to find. I am glad to think that you will probably see it, as Mr. Fletcher talks of exhibiting it in Liverpool. I should like to have witnessed your exploits . . . . . but, believe me, cousin, they are nothing to what I have achieved in the 'north countrie' with my mazourkas, and polonoises, and another waltz which my good old host, Sir ——— is pleased to call one of my '*wildnesses*,' and which have actually won from

a grave clergyman of the Scottish kirk a sonnet, —yes, a veritable sonnet—inspired, as he declares, by my 'flying fingers' soft control.' With this, and the admiration of ——— to boot, it is not marvellous that my head retains any sort of equilibrium? Treat me with due reverence, *Sir and my cousin*, when next we meet, that I may be let down to the familiarities of ordinary life by gentle degrees. Your visits to Boscobel and Hodnet must have been delightful—the latter especially; I admire your resolute spirit of *faith*: for my part, so determined is *mine*, that if I went to Rushin Castle, I should certainly look for the giant, said to be chained and slumbering in the dark vaults of that pile. Well, *mon cousin*, we shall meet so soon, that it is now scarcely worth while to talk over one's adventures in writing; besides, I feel myself in a state of dulness, having been obliged to entertain a party of leeches to my head last night, who seem to have drawn therefrom whatever brilliance it

might have contained. I will therefore only add Charles and Henry's love to my own, and beg you to believe me,

" Ever most truly yours,

" F. H."

CHAPTER III.

The "Songs of the Affections"—Extract from familiar correspondence—Haunted Hamlet near Melrose—"Rhine Song"—Lewis's "Tales of Terror"—Dr. Channing—Ballad on the Death of Aliatar—New Year's wishes—"The Fall of Nineveh"—"A Spirit's Return"—Analysis of character—The Rev. Edward Irving—De Lamartine's Poems—Mr. Roscoe—Pergolesi's "*Stabat Mater*"—New songs by Moore and Bishop—Manzoni's "*Cinque Maggio*"—Godwin's "Cloudesley"—Projected journey to the Lakes—Dramatic Scene—New volume of Poems.

It was towards the close of the year 1829, that Mrs. Hemans began to contemplate the publication of a new volume of poems. She had

already made some preparation for this by contributing a series of lyrics under the title of "Songs of the Affections" to Blackwood's Magazine; together with the long ballad, "The Lady of Provence," which, for the glowing pictures it contains, the lofty yet tender affection to which it is consecrated, and the striking but never uncouth changes of its versification, must be considered as one of its author's finest *chivalresque* poems. She had still, however, to produce some work of greater importance than these, suitable for the commencement of a volume. The subject at length fixed upon by her, as peculiar as it was almost dangerously fascinating, was suggested by a fire-side conversation. It had long been a favourite amusement to wind up our evenings by telling ghost stories. One night, however, the store of thrilling narratives was exhausted, and we began to talk of the feelings with which the presence and the speech of a visitant from another world (if, indeed, a spirit *could* return,) would be most

likely to impress the person so visited. After having exhausted all the common varieties of fear and terror in our speculations, Mrs. Hemans said that she thought the predominant sensations at the time must at once partake of awe and rapture, and resemble the feelings of those who listen to a revelation, and at the same moment know themselves to be favoured above all men, and humbled before a being no longer sharing their own cares or passions; but that the person so visited must thenceforward and for ever be inevitably separated from this world and its concerns: for the soul which had once enjoyed such a strange and spiritual communion, which had been permitted to look, though but for a moment, beyond the mysterious gates of death, *must* be raised, by its experience, too high for common grief again to perplex, or common joy to enliven. She spoke long and eloquently upon this subject, and I have reason to believe that this conversation settled her wandering fancy, and gave

rise to the principal poem in her next volume. Of her smaller occupations and cares during the autumn and winter, the following fragments will supply sufficient record.

"I must tell you how much pleasure I have, my dear sir, in renewing the long suspended intercourse by our own 'post,' who is, I hope, prepared with due resignation for the days of toil that await her. I seem scarcely to have seen you since my return . . . Would you have the kindness either to bring or send me, when you have leisure to find it, the number of the Edinburgh Review containing Mr. Carlyle's remarks on Burns, with which I much wish to renew my acquaintance . . . .

"I always forgot to tell you that I had the comfortable satisfaction of beholding with my own eyes, near Melrose, the site of a little hamlet which had been deserted, not many years ago, on account of the visits of a spirit. The

ghost used to come about (*whistling*, I believe) at night from one house to another, and the inhabitants never could accustom themselves to his incursions; so they one and all migrated; and I believe he still retains possession of the territory. This was told me by Sir Walter, and very satisfactorily attested by an old shepherd, whose uncle or aunt had been one of the aggrieved natives, therefore I hope you will receive it in a proper spirit of faith." . . . .

"Would you be so kind as to write for me again those lines of Catullus on the return home, which you gave me some time since? I cannot at present find the copy. I should like them to be transcribed at the end of the MS. book which I send, and to which, recording as it does the various tastes and fancies and feelings of several years, I think they will form a not inappropriate conclusion. I am still enjoying, in much quiescence, the comparative stillness of

my home, only I find it rather difficult to return to the *dinner-ordering* cares of life, and should think a month's sojourn in the Castle of Indolence with 'nought around but images of *Rest*,' the most delightful thing in the world. How very truly you have often said that society could never be the sphere for me! I am come to a sort of comfortable conviction that you generally speak oracles on such subjects, at least as far as regards myself. . . . . Will you come here some evening early next week and read to me of 'Paynim chief and Christian knight;' shall it be Monday, Tuesday, or Wednesday? or this evening, if you are disengaged? but, if not, will you tell ——— I should be very glad to see him here. Can you divine on what days the musical lectures are to be given, which I wish to attend? They were the three on National, German, and Church music, but I quite forget in what order they were to come.

"Ever most truly yours,

"F H."

*"I am delighted that you were all so much pleased with the Rhine song, but I *could not* satisfy myself—it is a very weary feeling, that striving after the ideal beauty which one never, *never* can grasp. I am going to be quite alone this evening: how I wish you could come!"

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*"I had various fortunes in the world after I left you, my dear ———, and but little of the 'gentle satisfaction' I had proposed to myself from taking out my card-case. However, I do not consider the morning as entirely lost, since, at one house, where the lady was some time in making her appearance, I edified myself by the study of 'Pascal on the weakness of man.' . . . . I do not send Lewis's Tales of Terror, because I mean to have the pleasure of bringing them myself some evening if you should be disengaged, the week after next. I shall make myself look as ghostly as possible, and come in the character of the

'grim white woman.' Can you imagine one of my ballads, I do not know which, made into a sort of musical drama, and performed with scenery, &c.? I saw an account of it in an Irish newspaper, which my brother George sent me. It was performed at Lord F. Leveson Gower's, and the music, by an Italian professor, is said to be very beautiful.

"I return the 'Fair maid of Perth' with many thanks. Do not forget to tell me when you wish to send the Rhine song to ———: I can get it franked if you like.

"Ever your affectionate

"Felicia."

"I send you all the writings of Dr. Channing which I have yet been able to find, but I regret that amidst the revolutions of my little state during my absence, the 'Essay on Fénelon,' which, perhaps, you would most wish to have, has for the present disappeared. The ordina-

tion discourse, with which I do not know whether you are acquainted, is, in my opinion, the noblest and most spirit-stirring of all these works. And yet, though the voice of Channing's mind be both a winning and a mighty one, 'like to a trumpet with a silver sound,' I almost doubt the power of *any* voice to re-awaken a spirit in the state you describe:—is it not

'As violets plucked, which sweetest showers
May ne'er make grow again?'

I wish I could think otherwise, because the idea of such a state is one which often occurs to me, and which I contemplate in fear and sadness. I have found the Spanish ballad on the death of Aliatar, since you were here; and have been surprised, notwithstanding all the proud music of the original language, by the superior beauty of Southey's translation. The *refrain* of

'Tristes marchando,
Las trompas roncas,'

has certainly a more *stately* tone of sorrow, than

'Sad and slow,
Home they go,'

and yet the latter is to me a thousand times more touching. Is it that word *home* which makes it so, with all that it breathes of tenderness and sadness? I shall bring it with me to-morrow, and then we can decide. I shall be in ——— Street soon after twelve, and I mean to come armed for the lecture, by enveloping myself in Prince Charles Edward's '*escape tartan*,' as they call it, in Scotland, which I do think must have some power to assist me in evading the pursuit of the ———s. I mention this circumstance in order to prepare * you for

* In explanation of this pleasantry, it may be as well to state that the party addressed was accused of sharing, to the full, in Doctor Johnson's *Southron* prejudices and antipathies.

my Avatar in such a costume, which I fear, notwithstanding this precaution, may come upon you with all the effect of 'Roy's wife,' or 'Scots who hae wi' Wallace bled.'"

* * * *

". . . . . I am sure I should have been much better, but for an alarm of *invasion*, which occurred late in the night, and the disturbance occasioned by which has somewhat increased my nervous tremors, as you may judge by the ridiculous hand I am writing. Some of the letters put me in mind of Sir Walter Scott's description of an octagon, which he calls 'a circle in an ague-fit.' I thought I had a great many things to speak to you about and to show you yesterday evening; but, somehow or other, they were all driven out of my foolish head, and have found a place, I would fain hope, in *your* planet, where, perhaps, they may one day be found with other lost 'sub-

tleties.' I send you 'Garcilaso,' whose volume pray keep, as long as your reading it without interrupting other studies may require; it is not new to me. I wish you would mark any passages that strike you." . . . .

"I think I must have seemed very ungrateful, in not having more warmly thanked you for all your good wishes on the approach of another year, which have been so kindly expressed. But there is something in the expression of such wishes, when I know them, as I *do* know them, from you to be cordial and sincere, which awakens within me a feeling at once too grateful and too sorrowful to find utterance in language. They come to me almost as joyful music from shore might come to one far on the waters, speaking of things in which he has 'neither part nor share,' and yet the sound is welcome. Will you believe how unfeignedly I would return such wishes to you, whose path yet lies

before you, and yet I fain hope would lead to happiness? And wherever that path may take you, or whatever *my* fate may be, when you would seek pleasure or comfort from the idea that you are followed by many and earnest thoughts of kindness, will you then think of me, as one who will ever feel in your welfare the faithful interest of a sisterly friend? *

"Ever most truly yours,

"F. H."

"My dear sir,

". . . . I hope we shall have a *German* evening soon; I have found some fine old ballads in the 'Wunderhorn,' which I want to show you, and we must read a little of Iphigenia; I had no idea that those awful iambics,

* I hope it is hardly necessary to point to the singular beauty of expression and feeling of this note, as an excuse for printing one so exclusively personal in its subject.

(if iambics they be, for I am in the profoundest ignorance on such subjects,) could have retained so much harmony in our language.

"On calling up and reconsidering my impressions of Martin's picture,* it seems to me that something more of gloomy grandeur might have been thrown about the funeral pyre; that it should have looked more like a *thing apart*, almost suggesting of itself the idea of an awful sacrifice. Perhaps it was not in the resources of the painter to do all this; but the imagination, *mine* at least, seems to require it.

"I should like you to read over my Spirit song to yourself, when you have leisure, and then tell me your impression of it; I will send it in a day or two. Sometimes I think that I have sacrificed too much in the apparition scene, to the idea that sweetness and beauty might be combined with supernatural effect; the character of the Greek sculpture, which has so singular a hold upon my imagination, was much

* The Fall of Nineveh.

in my thoughts at the time. You must tell me anything that occurs to you on the subject. Have you read Manzoni's noble ode on the death-day of Napoleon, translated by Archdeacon Wrangham? It has just been sent me by Signor Grimaldi, and I know not when I have met with Italian poetry so rich in deep thought and powerful expression.

"Ever believe me faithfully yours,

"F. H."

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* "I regret that your kind note should have remained so long unanswered, but as some compensation, if indeed, I may call it such, I send you a few songs to read, which I have lately been writing for music, and which I thought you would, perhaps, like to see before they are sent to the composers. You will, perhaps, trace the *last* to some of the associations awakened by our Utilitarian friend, though

* This letter has been accidentally displaced: it belongs to the memorials of the ensuing winter.

I think his pretensions to that title are as dubious as ——— very contemptuously said Mr. ———'s were to the character of a *gourmand*. I do not know when I have been more amused than by his grotesque flights of conversation the evening I met him at your house, though I *was* a little startled at the idea of '*my grandfather's head*,' which his fancy wanted to set before me in a charger. I hope you have at last run the gauntlet through all the Rontim-Bontims, and are allowing yourself a little rest; otherwise, I must say, with my particular favourite 'Daniel O'Rourke,' I think you 'a man to be pitied among them:' my own intimate conviction being that 'of all dull things, the dullest is festivity,' I am prepared to give you as much sympathy on the occasion as you may require. Pray do not ask about my 'Fantasy-piece,' or I shall think you *an embodied conscience*, (a sort of demon, which, by-the-bye, I think I might introduce with appalling effect whenever the work *is* written.) I am sojourning at present in the Castle of Indolence, and I will

not be disturbed. There is a queenly sentence for you! Wake me not!

"Have you looked at Moore's Byron yet? I must say that what I have seen of it in the papers, is to me so inexpressibly disgusting, that I shall certainly not read the book until I hear your report."

. . . . "I rather think that I write to you this morning solely *pour promener mes dégoûts*, on which I expect you will bestow as much sympathy as may reasonably be demanded. I am so thoroughly tired of criticism and analysis, and sharp two-edged swords of sentences, that I really begin to look upon Goëthe's currant wine making women, as the true and fitting models for feminine imitation. *Qu'en pensez-vous?* For my part, I have serious thoughts of going over to this side, and I hereby invite you to come and partake of the first metheglin, hippocras, or pigment, in which my genius may find its proper and natural channel, and flow

forth to the gladdening of all my happy friends.

"In the mean time, however, and as the materials for these my designs cannot be immediately collected, I send you part of the conversation which so much delighted me in Tieck's 'Phantasien.' I think you will recognise all the high tone of the thoughts, and be pleased with the glimpse, a bright though transient one, of the dreaming-land—that strange world, which were I to designate it by my own experience, I should call a wilderness of beauty and of sorrow." . . . .

"Many thanks for all your kind remembrance of me. I really think the music beautiful, particularly at the close, and only wonder it has not made a fuller impression upon you. As for the launch,* provided the weather will allow of my

* This was one of the sights which Mrs. Hemans had expressed the strongest wish to see. She had always, it may be remembered, a more than common

witnessing it, I have no fear of disappointment. My imagination generally does me one good service on such occasions, that of

> 'Clothing the palpable and the familiar
> With golden exhalations like the morn.'

I believe it is only where the *feelings* are deeply interested that the imagination causes such perpetual bitterness of disappointment. Do you remember St. Leon's dissatisfaction at the manner in which his daughters receive the

interest in the things of the sea; and the spectacle not only touched her enthusiastic English feelings, but excited her imagination, by suggesting to her the many chances and changes which must befall the traveller of the ocean, whose birth, as it were, she witnessed. Something of this nature she had previously expressed in her lyric, "The parting ship." But the vessel she saw launched was but a second-rate merchantman; and I cannot but think she must have been disappointed, because no allusion to the sight (with her, a natural and necessary consequence of any addition made to her store of pleasures) is, as far as I am aware, to be found in any of her later poems.

tidings of his death? I begin to think that all imaginative persons are, to a certain degree, St. Leons, and that they expect what human nature is very seldom rich enough to afford. I scarcely think you have had an opportunity of observing the *most* amusing peculiarities in my guest, who has now left me. I almost thought she would herself have *called out* a person by whom I latterly considered myself aggrieved, and I do not believe that he could, consistently with any regard for his personal safety, have crossed the threshold during his stay with me. Truly it is very pleasant to be so well guarded; but I cannot reconcile myself to that prevailing habit of *analysing* every thing, fancies, feelings, even friends—which is the favourite occupation of her mind. Now I can bear being analysed with perfect indifference; but my friends are so completely severed and set apart in my eyes from all the *gentile* world, that I have no idea of their being subjected to this desecrating process, actually made studies of character to be examined

'in the light of common day.' No, it is not to be endured, whatever skill and science may be brought to the work of dissection.

I was told yesterday by Mr. Scoresby, that Mr. Irving is to preach in Liverpool next Sunday. I wish very much to hear him. Would you go with me? I must own, in all contrition of spirit, that I have never been very much affected by any pulpit eloquence, and hoping that the cause does not lie in my own incorrigible hardness of heart, I am really anxious to give myself another trial, and should be delighted to find my mind thoroughly subdued."

TO MR. L——.

"March 30, 1830.

"My dear Sir,

"I send the two songs* which I beg you to

* "*The Muffled Drum,*" and the "*Spirit's Song;*" both of these have been recently published with their very characteristic and expressive music.

accept as a token of the real delight your music has afforded me. As I have written them expressly for you, pray tell me candidly whether you find difficulties from any parts of the measure, and would like to have some alterations; because I really wish to make them what you will feel most pleasure in setting. I should not so much ask whether you find *difficulties*, because those I know you could soon overcome, as whether you think any passage unsuitable to music. . . . .

"I send 'the Beacon,' which I hope will not disappoint you, and I believe you also wished to look at Lamartine's poems; they certainly possess a much deeper feeling than I have ever met with in French poetry, excepting perhaps, that of Casimir Delavigne." . . . . .

TO MR. L——.

"April, 1830.

"My dear Sir,

"I write to tell you that I passed some time this

morning with Mr. Roscoe, and on mentioning to him your wish of calling, he gave me leave to say, that he should have much pleasure in receiving you any day between the hours of twelve and three. I told him of the interest you took in Italian literature, and he said he should like much to show you a splendid edition of the life of Lorenzo, lately sent him by the Grand Duke of Tuscany. As his health is extremely unsettled, and he happens just now to have a bright interval, I should think you had better avail yourself of it, for he is often obliged to pass months in entire seclusion. . . . I enclose the altered verse of the 'Spirit's Voice," in which I hope the difficulties are now obviated. I have found so very few *brothers-in-rhyme* to the unhappy word 'never,' that I thought it better to excommunicate him at once.

"Very sincerely yours, &c., &c.

"F. H."

Earlier allusion should have been made, in enumerating the pleasures and privileges of Mrs. Hemans' residence in Liverpool, to her occasional intercourse with Mr. Roscoe, who was then passing through an old age of such serenity and cheerfulness, as can never be forgotten by those who were permitted to look upon it. In spite of the inroads made by repeated illness, his mind remained bright and benevolent to the last; so long as they were permitted to approach him, he appeared to take pleasure in the visits of the young,—would interest himself in their little plans and prospects, and talk to them of his own past labours with the conscious pleasure of one who feels that "his work hath well been done." In the poetry of Mrs. Hemans Mr. Roscoe had always taken great pleasure; he was fond of having it read in his hearing. I know that she felt the full value of his approbation, and used to speak of him with almost filial regard, and of her visits to him as among the happiest and most salutary hours she passed. In general,

she was singularly fond of the society of old men.

TO MR. L——.

"April, 1830.

"My dear Sir,

"I am quite sorry that you should have distressed yourself about the 'Ricciarda,' which I found this morning in the room where you had left your cloak, and I was regretting that I had no means of sending it to you. I am *sure* that I shall be delighted with your arrangement of the 'Parting words,' because I never find any music embody, like yours, all those shades and fluctuations of feeling which I so often vainly strive to fix in language; and whenever I try to write anything of deeper and more fervent character than usual, I shall always wish for you to give it expression.

"It is quite impossible for me to tell you the

impression I have received from that most spiritual music of Pergolesi's,* which really *haunted* me the whole night. How much I have to thank you for introducing me, in such a manner, to so new and glorious a world of musical thought and feeling!

"I shall read the life of Haydn with great interest. An Edinburgh journal, which I have just received, gives an account of a new work by Moore and Bishop, which, perhaps, you may like to see, and I therefore send it: though the poetry seems to me of but a *tinkling* character: one verse of 'The stilly night,' or 'Those evening bells,' I should say was worth it all.

* His "*Stabat Mater.*" The earnest, enthusiastic, affectionate character of Pergolesi, and his early death, hastened, it was said, by the delay of that success which was the due of his splendid genius, was sure to interest Mrs. Hemans. She once thought, I believe, of making his feelings and fortunes the subject of a poem.

. . . . . I have just had a very amusing visit from a Spaniard, who told me that he used to write poetry, but 'that the Muses *looked cross at him* for keeping account-books.'

"Very sincerely yours, &c. &c.

"F. H."

"I have found the music to the 'Burial of Sir John Moore,' which I send you to look at, though I think it very inferior to the words, which would require something dark and deep and *Beethovenish*."

TO MR. L——.

"April 8th, 1830.

"My dear Sir,

"I am predetermined not to give Mr. —— 'a single sous' of praise, and it must have been with the view of confirming me in this resolve that you have communicated the opinion

of ——. Pray accept my best thanks for the songs, the music of which I am sure *must* give me pleasure, though it may increase my regret for the privation of my voice. I shall be very glad to become acquainted with part of your opera. As for those most Arcadian decorations, I should as soon have suspected you of the suggestion—'Write an ode to music.' That fearful word *ode*, reminds me of Manzoni, whose splendid poem, the '*Cinque Maggio*,' I enclose, and beg you to keep, as I can now procure another copy: some of its verses remind me of Sir Philip Sidney's idea with regard to Chevy Chace, which he said 'stirred the heart like the sound of a trumpet.' . . . . .

"I fear I shall have detained your servant an unconscionable time; I have had some difficulty in finding ———'s volume, which my *Folletto*—(did I ever tell you that I had a Folletto quite as mischievous as Tasso's?) had provokingly hidden. You are further to attribute to the agency of this wicked sprite the various blots

and erasures with which my note seems to abound.

"Very sincerely yours,

"F. H."

TO MR. L——.

"May 10th.

"My dear Sir,

"How much you must have enjoyed that spirit-stirring music of 'Guillaume Tell!' Oh! that I could have been there!—but the nearest approach to musical sounds which has greeted my ear since you went, (for I have been too unwell either to go out or to play myself,) has been the gentle ticking of Dr. R——'s watch, regularly produced on the portentous occasion of feeling my pulse. So vegetative a life, indeed, have I been leading, that if I had lived in the old mythological days, I should certainly imagine I was undergoing a metamorphose into some kind of tree. The doctors have announced

that, without very great care, another winter in this climate will be dangerous to me:—truly, a comfortable sentence to me who never could take care of myself in my life; indeed it is a thing which I am convinced requires *a natural genius* for care to succeed in at all. I have been reading Godwin's 'Cloudesley:' it does not, I think, carry away the imagination with any thing like the mighty spirit of his earlier works,—but is beautifully written, with an occasional flow of rich and fervent eloquence, reminding me of the effects he attributes to the conversation of his own old alchemist in 'St. Leon.' Pray tell me if you have composed anything since your arrival in town. Your being able to compose there *at all* is to me little less marvellous than alchemy itself, or any other of Mr. Godwin's phantasies. I wonder whether the enclosed lines will remind you at all of Pergolesi. I had his music full in my imagination when I composed them. I was very ill and faint; not exactly fancying myself arrived at life's

last hour, but longing to hear such a strain as the '*Stabat Mater.*'"

In the spring of 1830, Mrs. Hemans projected that journey to the Lake district, of which so delightful a record will be found in the following chapter. She made her escape from a neighbourhood, *outwardly* always distasteful to her, for its total want of beautiful scenery,—all the more gladly, from having been more than usually pressed upon by the claims and the curiosity of strangers. To a visitation from one of the latter, the humours of which were more than usually ludicrous, reference is made in the two following fragments.

* "My dear ——,

"Will you come and see me to-morrow evening with your brother?—do, there is a good girl!—and shall I come and see you on Wednesday evening? You would all get wofully tired

of me at this rate, but I am going away so soon that the danger will for the present be obviated. I wish you were going with me—what a great deal of mischief we might accomplish together! the very rumour of it would startle Mr. De Quincy out of his deepest opium-dream. What a pity such brilliant exploits are to remain lost among the things that might have been! 'The ibis and the crocodile would have trembled to hear of them.' Now, dear ———, be sure you come to-morrow evening. . . . .

"Oh! the —— . . . . ! she came and laid her friendship at my feet the morning of her departure, and I, 'pebble-hearted' wretch that I am! never stooped to pick it up."

"I had given up the weary task of attempting to curtail those hundred-footed speeches in the dramatic scene,* before I received your note.

* "Don Sebastian," a fragment of a dramatic poem, published among the "Poetical Remains."

I only altered one line, having made sufficient progress in natural history, since I wrote, to discover that lions do not attack people who are asleep! Heaven be praised! —— really has evaporated! she paid her farewell visit the other morning after you were here, and made so formal, serious, and solemn an offer of her friendship, 'for ever and a day,' that I, secretly conscious of my own unworthiness, was perfectly bewildered, and can only hope that my blushes on this trying occasion were attributed to an excess of sensibility."

The "Songs of the Affections" were published in the summer of 1830. This collection of lyrics has been, perhaps, less popular than other of Mrs. Hemans' later works. It was hardly, indeed, to be expected, that the principal poem, "A Spirit's Return," the origin and subject of which have been already described, should

appeal to the feelings of so large a circle as had borne witness to the truth of the tales of actual life and sacrifice and suffering contained in the "Records of Woman." But there are parts of the poem solemnly and impressively powerful. The passages in which the speaker describes her youth —the disposition born with her to take pleasure in spiritual contemplations, and to listen to that voice in nature which speaks of another state of being beyond this visible world—prepare us most naturally for the agony of her desire,— when he, in whom she had devotedly embarked all her earthly hopes and affections

. . . . "till the world held nought
Save the *one* being to my centred thought,"

was taken away from her for ever—to see him, if but for a moment—to speak with him, only once again! The coming of the apparition, too, is described with all the plainness and intensity of the most entire conviction, so difficult, in these

days, for a writer to assume.* As the crisis of interest approaches, the variety given by alternate rhymes to the heroic measure in which the tale was written, is wisely laid aside, and it proceeds with a resistless energy.

" Hast thou been told that from the viewless bourne
The dark way never hath allowed return?

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* Might it not almost be said, so impossible to be assumed by those who have wholly and scornfully cast off those superstitions, so distasteful to reason, but so dear to fancy? It is impossible, in reading Sir Walter Scott's incomparable descriptions of supernatural visitations, — the episode of the " Bodach Glas," for instance, or " Wandering Willie's tale," or the vigil of Master Holdenough in the Mirror Chamber, (though this is afterwards explained away,)—to imagine that the creator of these scenes did not, in some measure, *believe* in their possibility, though it might be but with a poetical faith. Were it otherwise, they must strike us as unnaturally as the recent French revivifications of the antique Catholic legends and mysteries—as merely grotesque old fables, adopted as studies by clever artists, for the sake of their glaring contrasts and effective situations.

That all, which tears can move, with life is fled,
That earthly love is powerless on the dead?
Believe it not!—there is a large lone star
Now burning o'er yon western hill afar,
And under its clear light there lies a spot
Which well might utter forth, 'Believe it not!'

I sat beneath that planet,—I had wept
My woe to stillness; every night-wind slept;
A hush was on the hills; the very streams
Went by like clouds, or noiseless founts in dreams,
And the dark tree o'ershadowing me that hour,
Stood motionless, even as the grey church-tower
Whereon I gazed unconsciously;—there came
A low sound, like the tremor of a flame,
Or like the light quick shiver of a wing,
Flitting through twilight woods, across the air;
And I looked up!—oh! for strong words to bring
Conviction o'er thy thought!—Before me there,
He, the departed, stood!—ay, face to face—
So near, and yet how far!" * * * *

The conclusion of this fine poem is far from fulfilling the promise of its commencement: but it was impossible to imagine any events, or give

utterance to any feelings, succeeding those so awful and exciting, which should not appear feeble, and vague, and exhausted. Mrs. Hemans would sometimes regret that she had not bestowed more labour upon the close of her work: this, it is true, might have been more carefully elaborated; but, from the nature of her subject, I doubt the possibility of its having been substantially improved.

CHAPTER IV.

Mr. Wordsworth's poetry—Mrs. Hemans' visit to the Lakes—Her letters from Rydal Mount—Passage from Haco—Genius compatible with domestic happiness—State of music among the Lakes—Mr. Wordsworth's reading aloud—Anecdote—Dove Nest—Accident on horseback—Letters from Dove Nest—Winandermere—The St. Cecilia—Whimsical letter—Letter of counsel—Commissions—Anecdote of a bridal gift—Readings of Schiller—Second journey into Scotland—M. Jeffrey—*Six Mrs. Hemans*—Change of residence.

Early in the summer, Mrs. Hemans put into execution her long-cherished plan of finding rest and refreshment for a weary spirit among the beautiful scenery of the Lakes. She was drawn

thither by the additional motive of a wish to enjoy the personal intercourse of one whom, for the sake of his writings, she had long loved and reverenced as a friend and a counsellor. And thus it is, indeed, that all poets who are true to the divine gifts bestowed upon them, must ultimately be regarded by the sincere and faithful-hearted: though, for a while, their voices may be drowned by the outcries which the world idly raises against what it will not take the trouble, or *fears*, to understand. The feelings which impressed Mrs. Hemans on being first introduced to the poetry of Mr. Wordsworth, have been already shown in her own confession:—I must insist upon the fact that her conviction of his great and noble powers grew upon her with every year of her life; and, I am persuaded, ultimately exercised a beneficial and calming effect upon a mind, by nature eager, and by circumstances rendered, for a time impatient, and ill at ease, and subject to the most painful alternations of mood. Mrs. Hemans' copy of Mr. Wordsworth's works might be

called her poetical breviary: there was scarcely a page that had not its mark of admiration or its marginal comment or illustration.* She was unwearied in recommending the study of his poems, and in pointing out and repeating their finest passages. Then, too, her political biases (gentle as they were, and never for a moment made manifest in controversy) made her

* It was a habit with Mrs. Hemans, to illustrate her favourite books with the thoughts excited by their perusal, and with such parallel passages from other writers as bore upon their subject. If one of her intimate friends lent her a book which she chanced to *adopt*, it was sure to return thus enriched. I remember, in particular, that her copy of Mr. Auldjo's "Ascent of Mont Blanc"—which, fortunately, had the amplest of margins—was positively written over with snatches of description, and quotations of poetry, for some of which, I suspect, it would have been no more difficult to find their owner, than it was to assign the delightful fragments from "Old Plays," which headed the chapters of the Waverley novels, to their real source.

look up to him as one of the few, in whose reverence for the wisdom of our ancestors, and manly religious feeling, and deep wisdom, lay the hope and the safety of our country.

On all these grounds, it will be readily imagined with what delight Mrs. Hemans looked forward to enjoying such companionship for a brief summer-season. She had been worn out with empty flattery and vulgar curiosity, and longed for shelter, and silence, and repose,

> . . . . " in sunny garden bowers
> Where vernal winds each tree's low tones awaken,
> And bud and bell with changes mark the hours."

With what a natural eloquence of gladness she poured forth her delight in finding her expectations more than realized, the following letters will show. They are purposely given with fewer omissions than any of the previous series, as offering a perfect picture of her mind, when under its best influences, and least shaken by the cares which, at times, weighed it down so heavily. Nor will the

pleasantries they contain—in which the poet of thought and daily life, and the poetess of the affections and of the imagination, are so happily contrasted—be misunderstood by those who love a mind none the less for its changes from grave to gay, and who find a security for its truth, in the artless expression of all its moods and fancies.

Mrs. Hemans was accompanied on this journey by her youngest son—the other two still under her care joining her when she was settled among the Lakes. As usual, she was unwearied in communicating her impressions to those with whom, when at home, she shared every thought and feeling of the passing hour.

"Rydal Mount, Monday, June 22nd, 1830.

"You were very kind in writing to me so soon, ——, and making the remembrance of my journey with you one of unmingled pleasure, by your assurance that all was well on your return. For myself, I can truly say that my enjoyment

of your society and kindness, and the lovely scenery by which we were surrounded, made those pleasant days seem as a little isle of sunshine in my life, to which I know that memory will again and again return. I felt very forlorn after you were gone from Ambleside: —— came and went without exciting a smile, and my nervous fear at the idea of presenting myself alone to Mr. Wordsworth, grew upon me so rapidly, that it was more than seven before I took courage to leave the inn. I had indeed little cause for such trepidation. I was driven to a lovely cottage-like building, almost hidden by a profusion of roses and ivy; and a most benignant-looking old man greeted me in the porch: this was Mr. Wordsworth himself; and when I tell you that, having rather a large party of visitors in the house, he led me to a room apart from them, and brought in his family by degrees, I am sure that little trait will give you an idea of considerate kindness which you will

both like and appreciate. In half an hour I felt myself as much at ease with him as I had been with Sir Walter Scott in half a day. I laughed to find myself saying, on the occasion of some little domestic occurrence, 'Mr. Wordsworth, how *could* you be so giddy?' He has, undeniably, a lurking love of mischief, and would not, I think, be half so safely intrusted with the tied-up bag of winds as Mr. —— insisted that Dr. Channing might be. There is an almost patriarchal simplicity, an absence of all pretension, about him, which I know you would like; all is free, unstudied—'the river winding at its own sweet will'—in his manner and conversation there is more of impulse about them than I had expected, but in other respects I see much that I should have looked for in the poet of meditative life: frequently his head droops, his eyes half close, and he seems buried in quiet depths of thought. I have passed a delightful morning to-day in walking with him about his own

richly-shaded grounds, and hearing him speak of the old English writers, particularly Spenser, whom he loves, as he himself expresses it, for his 'earnestness and devotedness.' It is an *immeasurable* transition from Spenser to ———, but I have been so much amused by Mr. Wordsworth's characterizing her as a '*tumultuous young woman*,'* that I cannot forbear transcribing the expression for the use of my friends. I must not forget to tell you that he not only admired our exploit in crossing the Ulverston sands as a deed of 'derring do,' but as a decided proof of taste; the Lake scenery, he says, is never seen to such advantage as after the passage of what he calls its majestic barrier. Let me write out the passage from Haco, before I quite exhaust my paper: this was certainly the *meaning* we both agreed upon; though I did not recollect your translation sufficiently well to arrange the versification accordingly.

* This refers to the party alluded to in the last fragments of correspondence in the last chapter.

'Where is the noble game that will not seek
A perilous covert, ev'n from wildest rocks,
In his sore need, when fast the hunter's train
Press on his panting flight?'"

"Rydal Mount, June 24th, 1830.

"My dear Mr. L——,

"I was on the point of migrating to the land of Lakes when your former letter reached me; I delayed acknowledging it until I had arrived at my place of destination, Mr. Wordsworth's house, where I now am, and where I have just had the pleasure of hearing from you again. . . . You can scarcely conceive a more beautiful little spot than Rydal Mount; my window is completely embowered in ivy and roses, and Winandermere lies gleaming among the hills before it:—what a contrast to the *culinary* regions about Liverpool! I am charmed with Mr. Wordsworth himself; his manners are distinguished by that frank simplicity which I

believe to be ever the characteristic of *real* genius; his conversation perfectly free and unaffected, yet remarkable for power of expression and vivid imagery; when the subject calls forth any thing like enthusiasm, the poet breaks out frequently and delightfully, and his gentle and affectionate playfulness in the intercourse with all the members of his family, would of itself sufficiently refute Moore's theory in the Life of Byron, with regard to the unfitness of genius for domestic happiness. I have much of his society, as he walks by me while I ride to explore the mountain glens and waterfalls, and he occasionally repeats passages of his own poems in a deep and thinking tone, which harmonizes well with the spirit of these scenes. . . . . The state of music here is something of the darkest. Rossini, Beethoven, Weber, are names that have never awakened the mountain echoes, *here* at least. And a lady was so charmed the other day with the *originality* of 'Ah perdona,' that with the view, as she said, of obtaining 'a

little *new* music,' she instantly, in the innocence of her heart, set about transcribing the whole."

. . . . .

"Rydal Mount, June 24th, 1830.

"Will you favour me by accepting this copy of the little volume, in the preparation of which I was so greatly indebted to your kindness? I have written your name in it, and in the other two that of Dr. ——, to whom I wish you would present them with my grateful respects. I seem to be writing to you almost from the spirit-land; all is here so brightly still, so remote from every-day cares and tumults, that sometimes I can scarcely persuade myself I am not dreaming. It scarcely seems to be 'the light of common day,' that is clothing the woody mountains before me; there is something almost *visionary* in its soft gleams and ever-changing shadows. I am charmed with Mr. Wordsworth, whose kindness to me has quite a soothing influence

over my spirits. Oh! what relief, what blessing there is in the feeling of admiration, when it can be freely poured forth! 'There is a daily beauty in his life,' which is in such lovely harmony with his poetry, that I am thankful to have witnessed and *felt* it. He gives me a good deal of his society, reads to me, walks with me, leads my poney when I ride, and I begin to talk with him as with a sort of *paternal* friend. The whole of this morning he kindly passed in reading to me a great deal from Spenser, and afterwards his own 'Laodamia,' my favourite 'Tintern Abbey,' and many of those noble sonnets which you, like myself, enjoy so much. His reading is very peculiar, but, to my ear, delightful; slow, solemn, *earnest* in expression more than any I have ever heard: when he reads or recites in the open air, his deep rich tones seem to proceed from a spirit-voice, and belong to the religion of the place; they harmonize so fitly with the thrilling tones of woods and waterfalls. His expressions are often strikingly poetical:

'I would not give up the mists that *spiritualize* our mountains for all the blue skies of Italy.' Yesterday evening he walked beside me as I rode on a long and lovely mountain-path high above Grasmere Lake: I was much interested by his showing me, carved deep into the rock, as we passed, the initials of his wife's name, inscribed there many years ago by himself, and the dear old man, like 'Old Mortality,' renews them from time to time; I could scarcely help exclaiming '*Esto perpetua!*" . . .

"Rydal Mount, June 25th, 1830.

"My dear Sir,

"The recurrence of the day on which I used so often to write to you, makes me wish to communicate with you again. I seem as if I longed to hear the voice of a 'familiar friend,' amidst the deep stillness of these beautiful scenes. Beautiful as they are, do you know I have not yet seen any thing to my eyes half so lovely as

our own Coniston; that first impression of lake scenery will never, I think, be effaced by a brighter. Grasmere, to which I often ride attended by Mr. Wordsworth, is exquisite, but, I scarcely know why, something of sadness seems to overshadow its secluded beauty, whilst all my recollections of Coniston are bright and fresh and joyous. You will be pleased to hear that the more I see of Mr. Wordsworth, the more I admire, and I may almost say, love him. It is delightful to see a life in such perfect harmony with all that his writings express, 'true to the kindred points of heaven and home!' You may remember how much I disliked, and I think you agreed with me in reprobating that shallow theory of Mr. Moore's with regard to the unfitness of genius for domestic happiness. I was speaking of it yesterday to Mr. Wordsworth, and was pleased by his remark, 'It is not because they *possess* genius that they make unhappy homes, but because they do not possess genius *enough;* a higher order of mind would

enable them to see and feel all the beauty of domestic ties.' He has himself been singularly fortunate in long years of almost untroubled domestic peace and union. . . . .

"How much I was amused yesterday, by a sudden burst of indignation in Mr. Wordsworth which would have enchanted ———. We were sitting on a bank overlooking Rydal Lake, and speaking of Burns. I said, 'Mr. Wordsworth, do you not think his war ode 'Scots who hae wi' Wallace bled,' has been a good deal over-rated? especially by Mr. Carlyle, who calls it the noblest lyric in the language?' 'I am delighted to hear you ask the question,' was his reply, 'over-rated! — trash! — stuff! — miserable inanity! without a thought—without an image!' &c. &c. &c.—then he recited the piece in a tone of unutterable scorn; and concluded with a *Da Capo* of 'wretched stuff!' I rode past De Quincy's cottage the other evening. . . .

"I hope you will write *very* soon. I really long for a 'voice from home.'"

" Rydal Mount, July 2nd, 1830.

" Will you not like to think of me at that lovely little Dove's Nest which we both of us admired so much from the lake, my dear Mr. ——— ? I was agreeably surprised to find it a lodging-house, and have taken apartments there for a fortnight; probably I may remain longer, but I almost fear that its *deep* though beautiful seclusion, would, for any length of time, be too much for one upon whom solitude bears back so many subjects of melancholy thought. If you were but near enough to come and pass the evenings with me! How I should enjoy making your coffee at the window, which looks forth to that glorious lake with all its glancing sails and woody islets! But I am sure your thoughts will sometimes be with me, when you can free them from the turmoil of your busy life, and the *resounding* streets, and I hope you will write to me very often. You may be quite sure that I always write to you from impulse, and the strong wish of communion rendered even stronger

to *my* nature by beautiful scenery and new impressions. I am indeed but *too* dependent on those to whom my mind has linked itself. Pray thank Dr. ——— for his very kind letter, which I will answer as soon as I am established at my Dove's Nest, where I shall have more time for writing. As you have so particularly requested me to tell you about my health, I must own that I am not quite so well as I was at the beginning of my sojourn here:—I was nearly thrown from a spirited horse I was riding the other evening, and have been as tremulous as an aspen leaf ever since. Mr. Wordsworth, I think, was more alarmed than myself, for by the time he came up to me, though I had with some difficulty kept my seat, my voice was completely gone, and I was unable to speak for many minutes. However, I continue to ride every day, and hope thus to conquer the nervous weakness which the adventure had left. Yesterday I rode round Grasmere and Rydal Lake; it was a glorious evening, and the imaged heaven in

the waters more completely *filled* my mind even to overflowing, than I think any object in nature ever did before: I quite longed for you: we should have stood in silence before the magnificent vision for an hour, as it flushed and faded, and darkened at last into the deep sky of a summer night. I thought of the scriptural expression, 'A sea of glass mingled with fire;' no other words are fervid enough to convey the least impression of what lay burning before me." . .

"Dove Nest, near Ambleside, July 6th, 1830.

"My dear ———,

"I think I was never so glad to hear from you, as when Claude and Henry brought me your kind and welcome letter on Saturday. I had been thinking of you so frequently since my arrival here, and so earnestly wishing to tell you all my feelings on taking possession of this lovely little bower, that I almost seemed, by the

strong power of mind, to have brought you near; and it really was like hearing the pleasant voice of a dear friend to receive your letter just *then*. How *shall* I tell you of all the loveliness by which I am surrounded, of all the soothing and holy influence it seems shedding down into my inmost heart? I have sometimes feared within the last two years, that the effect of suffering and adulation, and feelings too highly wrought, and too severely tried, would have been to dry up within me the fountains of such pure and simple enjoyment; but *now* I know that

'Nature never did betray
The heart that loved her.'—

I can think of nothing but what is pure, and true, and kind, and my eyes are filled with grateful tears even whilst I am writing all this to you—to *you*, because I know you will understand me. I want nothing here but the spirit of a friend to answer the feelings of my own—*that* is indeed a want which throws some shade

of sadness over this beautiful world, but I feel it far more bitterly amidst the world of society, where I find so many things to shrink from. Yet I think I never desired to talk to you so much and so often, as since I came here. I must try to describe my little nest, since I cannot call spirits from the 'vasty lake' to bring you hither through the air. The house was originally meant for a small villa, though it has long since passed into the hands of farmers, and there is in consequence an air of neglect about the little domain, which does not at all approach desolation, and yet gives it something of touching interest. You see everywhere traces of love and care beginning to be effaced: rose-trees spreading into wildness; laurels darkening the windows, with too luxuriant branches; and I cannot help saying to myself—'perhaps some heart like my own in its feelings and sufferings has here sought refuge and found repose.' The ground is laid out in rather an antiquated style, which, now that nature is beginning to reclaim

it from art, I do not at all dislike: there is a little grassy terrace immediately under the window, descending to a small court with a circular grass plot, on which grows one tall white rose-tree; you cannot imagine how I delight in that fair, solitary, neglected-looking tree. I am writing to you from an old-fashioned alcove in the little garden, round which the sweet-briar and moss rose-tree have completely run wild, and I look down from it upon lovely Winandermere, which seems at this moment even like another sky, so truly is every summer cloud and tint of azure pictured in its transparent mirror. It is quite a place in which to hear Mr. Wordsworth read poetry. Have I ever told you how much his reading and recitation have delighted me? His voice has something quite *breeze-like* in the soft gradation of its swells and falls. How I wish you could have heard it a few evenings since! We had just returned from riding through the deep valley of Grasmere, and were talking of different natural sounds, which in the stillness of

the evening had struck my imagination. 'Perhaps,' I said, 'there may be still deeper and richer music pervading all nature than any which we are permitted to hear.' He answered by reciting those glorious lines of Milton's—

. .

'Millions of spiritual creatures walk the earth,
Unseen, both when we wake and when we sleep,' &c.

And his tones of solemn earnestness, sinking, almost *dying* away into a *murmur* of veneration, as if the passage were breathed forth from the heart, I shall never forget; 'the forest leaves seemed stirred with prayer,' while those high thoughts were uttered. I have been writing to you in a most child-like and confiding spirit, shall I not have tired you out with my details? —no, I will not think so.

. . . . . .

"I do not feel as if I had said *half* that was in my mind to say; I should have thanked you sooner for all those spirit-stirring tales from the

early annals of England; they will afford me 'food for thought' some future day, and I have always pleasure in knowing what reading interests you; but I think my spirit is too much *lulled* by these sweet scenes to breathe one song of sword and spear until I have bid Winandermere farewell: Ned Bolton* was the last hero by whose exploits I have been in the least moved. My boys are so happy here, I wish you could see them. Henry out with his fishing-rod, and Charles sketching, and Claude climbing the hill above the Nest. I cannot follow, for I have not strength yet, but I think in feeling I am more a child than any of them.

"Now I *must* say good-bye, and reserve many things till I write again, which will be very soon.

"Ever believe me,

"Most truly yours,

"Felicia Hemans."

* The pirate-hero of one of Mr. Kennedy's spirited ballads.

The following postscript to one of the letters written from Dove Nest may here be inserted; its subject furnishes a pleasant contrast to the vivacity of the next extract.

"I must tell you how very much Mr. Wordsworth was pleased with 'The St. Cecilia,' particularly with the *nightingale* verse."

The lines in question (afterwards published among the "National Lyrics") were written to illustrate a picture of St. Cecilia with attendant angels, by Andrea Celesti. Mrs. Hemans had been much struck with the mingled calmness and inspiration which her apprehensive imagination had discovered, and greatly enhanced, in the countenance of the principal figure. She always loved to trace an under-current of sadness, some dim intimation of a world unseen and spiritual, even in the gayest and most careless music, and the *serenity* of the countenance of St. Cecilia had strongly impressed her mind

by its contrast with so favourite a superstition; the impression gave its colour to her poem. The second verse of the following was Mr. Wordsworth's favourite.

"Say, by what strain, through cloudless ether swelling,
Thou hast drawn down those wanderers from the skies?
Bright guests! even such as left of yore their dwelling
For the deep cedar shades of Paradise.

"What strain?—Oh! not the nightingale's, when showering
Her own heart's life-drops on the burning lay—
She stirs the young woods in their time of flowering,
And pours her strength, but not her grief, away.

"And not the exile's," &c. &c.

. . . . . .

"But thou!—the spirit which at eve is filling
All the hushed air, and reverential sky,

Founts, leaves, and flowers, with solemn rapture thrilling,
This is the soul of *thy* rich harmony.

" This bears up high those breathings of devotion,
Wherein the currents of thy heart gush free;
Therefore no world of sad and vain emotion,
Is the dream-haunted music-land for *thee!*"

" Dove Nest.

* " My dear ——,

" I have too long left unacknowledged your welcome letter, but the wicked world does so continue to persecute me with notes, and parcels, and dispatches, that, even *here*, I cannot find half the leisure you would imagine. Yesterday I had three visiting cards—upon which I look with a fearful and boding eye—left at the house, whilst I was sitting, in the innocency of my heart, thinking no harm, by the side of the lake. Imagine visiting cards at Dove's Nest! Robinson Crusoe's dismay at seeing the print of the man's

foot in the sand could have been nothing, absolutely nothing, to mine, when these evil tokens of 'young ladies with pink parasols' met my distracted sight, on my return from the shore. *En revanche*, however, I have just received the most exquisite letter ever indited by the pen of man, from a young American, who being an inhabitant of No. ——, ——, is certainly not likely to trouble me with anything more than his 'spiritual attachment,' as Mr. —— of —— is pleased to call it. He, that is, my American, must certainly not be the 'walking-stick,' but the very *leaping-pole* of friendship. Pray read, mark, learn, and promulgate for the benefit of the family, the following delectable passage. 'How often have I sung some touching stanza of your own, as I rode on horseback of a Saturday evening, from the village academy to my house a little distance out of town; and saw through the waving cedars and pines, the bark roof and the open door of some pleasant wigwam, where the young comely maidens were making their curious baskets, or

mocasins, or wampum-belts, and singing their 'To-gas-a-wana, or evening song!' How often have I murmured 'Bring flowers' or the 'Voice of Spring,' as thus I pondered along! How often have I stood on the shore of the Cayuga, the Seneca, the Oneida, and the Skanateles, and called to mind the sweetness of your strains!' I see you are enchanted, my dear ——, but this is not all: 'the lowliest of my admirers,' as the amiable youth entitles himself, begs permission to be for once my '*cordonnier*,' and is about to send me a pair of Indian *mocasins*, with my 'illustrious name interwoven in the buckskin of which they are composed, with wampum beads.' If I receive this precious gift before I return to Liverpool, I shall positively make my appearance, *en squaw*, the very first evening I come to —— street; and pray tell Dr. —— that with these mocasins, and *a blanket to correspond*, I shall certainly be able to defy all the rigours of the ensuing winter. I am much disappointed to find that there is no prospect of

your visiting this lovely country. I am sure that nothing would do —— so much good as a brief return to its glorious scenery: there is balm in the very *stillness* of the spot I have chosen. The 'majestic silence' of these lakes, perfectly soundless and waveless as they are, except when troubled by the wind, is to me most impressive. O what a poor thing is society in the presence of skies and waters and everlasting hills! You may be sure I do not allude to the dear intercourse of friend with friend—that would be dearer tenfold—more precious, more hallowed in scenes like this. Oh! how I wish you were here!" . . . .

In inserting the following letter, as well as two or three others which will be found in a later section of these memorials, a word of explanation, perhaps of apology, is requisite. It, and they are published for the sake of the ex-

cellent truths they contain, too valuable to be withheld,—by one who has passed through the struggle—from those who may be aspiring after the precarious honours, and are willing to encounter the certain cares of literary life, in preference to undertaking the duties of some profession less exciting, more steady, and more profitable. The following was addressed to the writer upon the intervention of an obstacle which bade fair to destroy for ever the hopes and dreams of many years.

"Dove Nest, July 11th.

"My dear ——,

"I am sure you will believe that I have read your letter with a full and most sincere participation of the varied feelings it expresses. As for your imps, poor dear little things! so great is my compassion for them, that I, even I, would at this moment of tender feeling, willingly uncork them all, though I believe the consequences would be little less awful than those

of emptying the bag of winds. But to speak more seriously,

> 'Let *nought* prevail against you, nor disturb
> Your cheerful faith.'

You will *not* be 'cribbed and cabined' by the influence of your daily toils: no, you will rise from them, as all minds gifted for worthier things *have* risen, with a pure and buoyant joy, into a world where they cannot enter. Tell me *one* instance of a generous spirit, ... which has sunk under the mere necessity for steadfast and manly exertion. Many, many, I believe, have been lost and bewildered for want of having this clear path marked out for them. I am convinced that you will be all the better for having your track so defined, and for knowing when and where you may turn aside from it to gather flowers upon which no soil of *earthiness* will have fallen. I could not write thus, if I thought that *one* precious gift was to be sacrificed to the employment upon which you have

entered. You know that I believe you to be endowed with powers for the attainment of excellence, and where such powers do exist, I also believe them to be *unconquerable*. How very gravely have I written to you! If you were sitting here beside me, I could hardly have spoken so: but I really have only wished to cheer and comfort 'my trusty cousin,' and I know he will not let me prove a false prophetess. However, I think that there is but little danger, and that with the prospect of your immediately commencing the —— and *then* composing the —— . . . . and writing out the Italian tale, besides about fifty pretty little *entremets*, of which I know nothing, the poor imps may take comfort in their bottles on the mantel-piece, while the '*fish do their duty*' in the fryingpan below. . . . . I am now writing a rather longer piece, though but slowly, and when it is completed I mean to send up one of your poems with it; I hope my compliance with his request will have so pleased him, that

he will see a thousand beauties in the composition of the 'proper useful young man' by whom mine will be escorted. I wish that same useful young man was near me just at present: I am going out upon the lake with the boys, and if our united giddiness does not get us into some difficulty or other, it will be sufficiently marvellous. *To be sure* I shall keep the precious *mocasin* letter—it will be the very key-stone of our edifice.* Do you know that I was actually found out here last night by a party of American travellers. . . . O words of fear!—and they came and stayed all the evening with me, and I was obliged to play *l'aimable*, and receive compliments, &c. &c. &c., here, even *here*, on the very edge of Winandermere. In other respects, I am leading the most primitive life—we literally 'take no note of time,' as there happens to be no clock in the

* Mrs. Hemans had often spoken playfully of making a collection of the whimsical letters with which she was assailed.

house. To be sure we get an *eleemosynary pinch of time* now and then, (as one might a pinch of snuff,) when any one happens to call with a watch, but that is a rare event. . . . . I shall be anxious to hear from you again, and to know that the imps are in a happier state. . . . .

"Ever your very faithful cousin,

"F. H."

"I believe I shall have to trouble you and —— and —— to make me up a parcel before long: Mr. Wordsworth wants to read a little of Schiller with me, and he is not to be had at Ambleside; and I want some chocolate—and *that* cannot be had at Ambleside—and a black silk spencer, after divers 'moving accidents by field and flood,' wants a *rifacciamento*—neither can that be had at the all-needing Ambleside; but I must write the affecting particulars to ——."

"Dove Nest.

* "My dear ——,

"I must frankly own that it is my necessities which impel me so soon to address you again. From the various dilapidations which my wardrobe has endured since I came into this country, I am daily assuming more and more the appearance of 'a decayed gentlewoman;' and if you could only behold me in a certain black gown, which came with me here in all the freshness of youth, your tender heart would be melted into tearful compassion. The ebony bloom of the said dress is departed for ever: the waters of Winandermere, (thrown up by oars in unskilful hands,) have splashed and dashed over it, the rains of Rydal have soaked it, the winds from Helm-crag have wrinkled it, and it is altogether somewhat in the state of

'Violets plucked, which sweetest showers,
May ne'er make grow again.'

Three yards of black silk, however, will, I be-

lieve, restore me to respectability of appearance, ... if —— will add a supply of chocolate, without which there is no getting through the fatigue of existence for me—and if —— or your brother —— will also send me a volume or two of Schiller—not the plays, but the poems—to read with Mr. Wordsworth, I shall then have a complete brown-paper full of happiness. Imagine, my dear ——, a bridal present made by Mr. Wordsworth, to a young lady in whom he is much interested—a poet's daughter, too! You will be thinking of a broach in the shape of a lyre, or a butterfly-shaped aigrette, or a forget-me-not ring, or some such 'small gear'—nothing of the sort, but a good, handsome, substantial, useful-looking pair of scales, to hang up in her store-room! 'For you must be aware, my dear Mrs. Hemans,' said he to me very gravely, 'how necessary it is occasionally for every lady to see things weighed herself.' '*Poveretta me!*' I looked as *good as I could*, and, happily for me, the poetic eyes are not very

clear-sighted, so that I believe no suspicion derogatory to my notability of character, has yet flashed upon the mighty master's mind: indeed I told him that I looked upon scales as particularly graceful things, and had great thoughts of having my picture taken with a pair in my hand." . . . .

"Dove Nest Cottage, Ambleside, July 20th, 1830.

"My dear Mr. L——,

"A letter which I received this morning from Liverpool mentions your having returned home, and I will therefore no longer delay writing to you, as you may perhaps wish to know my present address. I fear you have given up your intention of visiting the Lakes, as your last letter made no mention of it. The weather is indeed any thing but alluring, though there are few, even of the most lowering days *here*, among which one cannot get out of doors *in a paren-*

thesis, such as the *culinary regions* where you now are very seldom afford. I am anxious to know whether you received my little volume, which was sent for you to the Athenæum: very little of its contents would be new to you, though the arrangement of the whole might, I hope, afford you some pleasure. You were quite right about the name of '*my Cid*,' as the old Spanish chroniclers call him: it is Diaz, and not *Diar*, and he is a personage for whom I have so much respect, that it would have grieved me to see his 'style and title' falsified. I remained at Mr. Wordsworth's rather more than a fortnight, and then came to my present residence, a lonely, but beautifully situated cottage on the banks of Winandermere. I am so much delighted with the spot, that I scarcely know how I shall leave it. The situation is one of the deepest retirement; but the bright lake before me, with all its fairy barks and sails, glancing like 'things of life' over its blue water, prevents the solitude from being overshadowed by any

thing like sadness. I contrive to see Mr. Wordsworth frequently, but am little disturbed by other visitors: only the other evening, just as I was about to go forth upon the lake, a card was brought to me.——— Think of my being found out by American tourists in Dove's Nest! 'I wish ——, and ——, and ——, (for they were *all* impending over me,) were in the arms of Helvellyn and Catchedicam!' exclaimed I, most irreverently: but however, they brought credentials I could not but acknowledge. The young ladies, as I feared, brought an Album concealed in their shawls, and it was levelled at me like a pocket-pistol before all was over. When you see Mrs. ———, will you tell her that I have just had a very kind and pleasant letter from Lady Dacre: tell her, also, that I am going to read some of Schiller with Mr. Wordsworth. I know that she will understand that high enjoyment." . . .

" Dove Nest, Thursday.

" My dear Mr. ——,

" Having received ———'s parcel in safety, I have now two kind letters to thank you for . . . Will you tell ———, with my best remembrance, that Mr. Wordsworth thinks he shall be quite able to read the small edition of Schiller: he is now gone for a few days to his friend Lord Lowther's; but I hope, on his return, to read with him some of my own *first loves* in Schiller— 'The Song of the Bell,' 'Cassandra,' or 'Thekla's Spirit-voice,' with none of which he is acquainted. Indeed, I think he is inclined to undervalue German literature from not knowing its best and purest master-pieces. 'Goëthe's writings cannot live,' he one day said to me, 'because '*they are not holy!*' I found that he had unfortunately adopted this opinion from an attempt to read Wilhelm Meister, which had inspired him with irrepressible disgust. However, I shall try to bring him into a better way of

thinking, if only out of my own deep love for what has been to me a source of intellectual joy so cheering and elevating. I did not accomplish my visit to Coniston last Saturday; the 'cloud land' was too impervious to be entered. . . . Is it not very strange, and hateful, and wearifull, that, wherever I go, some odd old creature is sure to fall in love with me just out of spite? I am quite sure that if I went to Preston, *Miss* ——— (do you remember that long, thin, *deadly-looking* mansion with her name on the door?) would attach herself to me with the adhesive pertinacity of the Old Man of the Sea. This is really a part of my miseries which I do not think you have ever taken into proper consideration, or sympathised with as the case deserves. If you would but pity me enough, you cannot imagine how consolatory I should find it. . . . .

"You would scarcely know Charles if you were to see him now; he has broken forth into almost *tameless* vivacity. He wants very much

to write to you, but I thought, as you hear from me so often, it would not be necessary to impose upon you so juvenile a correspondent. I was greatly shocked a few days since to hear of the death of Mrs. ——— at Florence. It seemed quite suddenly, in one of those spasms of the heart which the physicians had predicted would end fatally; and Mr. ——— has returned *alone* to England. Just at this time last year I was with them, witnessing all their preparations for their Italian journey. I remember his being very much affected by a verse which I played and sung—

> 'She faded 'midst Italian flowers,
> The last of that bright band.'

I have got into a shocking habit, for which you will not thank me, of crossing my letters; but I always fancy I have so much to say when I write to you, that the paper is never half long enough. Will you tell ——— that I shall certainly make her first lady of the wardrobe, for her skill in choosing silks, whenever my long-

expected accession to the throne takes place. I am going this evening, for two or three days, to Grasmere; but if I do not fall into Dungeon Ghyll, which I am to visit thence, I shall be back at Dove's Nest on Sunday.

"Ever faithfully yours,

"Felicia Hemans."

After having remained for some weeks at Dove Nest, Mrs. Hemans was induced, by pressing invitations, again to visit Scotland. Of this second northern journey, I have but few memorials: the greater part of her time was spent at Milburn Tower, the seat of her venerable friend, Sir Robert Liston,—whence the following fragments were written.

"Mr. Jeffrey called upon me yesterday, and I was unluckily gone to Edinburgh, but we dine with him on Friday. I anticipate much enjoyment from his brilliance, but do hope he will not

quiz Wordsworth.* I could not bear *that* after the affectionate interest shown me by the latter, and continued to the very last moment of my stay in the neighbourhood. . . I rejoice that you have been so much pleased with Miss Kemble, it is so delightful to submit one's mind, fully, entirely to the spell of genius. I never could understand the *pleasure* of criticising. I have one thing more to say before I conclude. You will probably, in consequence of my visit to Scotland, hear reports with regard to a change of residence for me; be assured, that feeling towards you as towards a most valued friend, I

* The following extract from a subsequent letter refers to the visit in question.

"We passed a delightful day, our host being in the full glow of conversation, unequalled in rapid brilliance of imagery and illustration, (something like Paganini's *lightning* passages;) yet so easy, playful, and natural, that its brightness never seemed in the least fatiguing, which that of almost all the other *sparkling* people I ever met, at some time or other appeared to me."

should communicate to you any change of importance on which I had resolved, and therefore believe nothing that you do not hear from myself.

"Most truly yours,

"F. HEMANS."

. . . "Imagine my dismay on visiting Mr. Fletcher's sculpture-room, on beholding at least *six Mrs. Hemans*, placed as if to greet me in every direction. There is something absolutely frightful in this multiplication of one's self to *infinity*. *Apropos de bottes*, Mr. Fletcher is anxious to know whether his '*images*', as Mr. ———'s servants call them, are well placed in the Liverpool exhibition, and I promised that I would ask you to call there some day and judge for him. Will you write and let me know? Oh how I wish you could be here! how you would love this fair place with all its gorgeous flowers and leafy stillness!" . . . . . .

It was during this visit at Milburn Tower, that Mrs. Hemans formed a friendship, which led her to visit Dublin on her way homeward; and ultimately to decide on removing her residence from Wavertree to that city. The change, it will be seen, was, on the whole, beneficial. She was sure to attach to herself kind and energetic friends wherever she went; and no residence in a town could be more thoroughly exhausting and unprofitable than was hers at Wavertree—a village, but possessing not one single privilege or advantage which belongs to the country. Before, however, this step was finally arranged, Mrs. Hemans passed over into Wales,—the last time she ever visited the home of her youth,—to consult her brother upon the subject: and it was late in the year ere she re-returned to us, with the saddening news that her departure from our neighbourhood was determined upon.

CHAPTER V.

Fragments of correspondence—Journey through Anglesey — Aurora Borealis — Light-house — Passage from Mr. Bowdler's writings—Monument by Thorwaldsen—Personification in art and poetry—Goëthe —Rogers' "Italy"—Titian's portraits—Longevity of artists—Lessons in music—Evening spent with a celebrated linguist—Mr. Roscoe—Mr. Hare's pamphlets—Gibbon's "Sappho"—Character of Mrs. Hemans in the "Athenæum"—Life and Letters of Weber—The repose of old portraits—Young's Hamlet — The Cyclops proved light-houses — Howitt's "Book of the Seasons"—Poetical tributes—Wandering female singer — Wearisome dinner-party— Mrs. Hemans' pleasure in composing melodies— "Prayer at Sea after Battle"—Preparations for her departure from England—Shelley's poems—Vulgar

patronage—Collection of drawings—"Tancredi"—Discontinuance of pensions from the Royal Society of Literature.

THE winter which followed this long absence, so important in its consequences to the happiness of the few remaining years of Mrs. Hemans' life, on the whole, passed over rather sadly. The state of a person about to make any change in life, be it only a change of residence, must always be one of unsettlement and restraint: the mind is strangely divided between what it is giving up, and what it is hoping to gain; and it is difficult to sit down and undisturbedly enjoy the passing hours when they are felt to be last hours. It is true that Mrs. Hemans constantly spoke of frequent visits to England; that she fancied the distance between Liverpool and Dublin was not so great as finally to close, though it might interrupt, her intercourse with those who, for so long a time, had been almost her daily companions;—but the old communion was broken, and we could not but feel, that

though she still remained among us, as gracious, as affectionate as ever, her thoughts were hovering round the new home, in which she looked to find the repose and the shelter which had been denied to her in our busy, commercial neighbourhood. In procuring the advantages of education for her sons, she expected, and with reason, to be more fortunate than she had been in Liverpool.

Of the fragments of correspondence which follow, the larger portion were addressed to one of her new Irish friends. They require no further prefatory remark.

"I thought Anglesey, through which I travelled the next day, without exception, the most dreary, *culinary-looking* land of prose I ever beheld. I strove in vain to conjure up the ghost of a Druid, or even of a tree, on its wide mountainous plains, which, I really think, Nature must have produced to *rest herself* after the

strong excitement of composing the Caernarvonshire hills. But I cannot tell you how much I wanted to express my feelings when at last that bold mountain-chain rose upon me, in all its grandeur, with the crowning Snowdon, (very superior, I assure you, in 'shape and feature,' to our friend Ben Lomond,) maintaining his 'pride of place' above the whole ridge. And the Menai bridge, which I thought I should scarcely have noticed in the presence of those glorious heights, really seems, from its magnificence, a native feature of the scene, and nobly asserts the pre-eminence of *mind* above all other things. I could scarcely have conceived such an union of strength and grace; and its chain-work is so airy in appearance, that to drive along it seems almost like passing through the trellis of a bower: it is quite startling to look down from any thing which looks so fragile, to the immense depth below. . . . . My journey lay along the sea-shore rather late at night, and I was surprised by quite a splendid vision of the

northern lights, on the very spot where I had once, and once only, before seen them in early childhood. They shot up like slender pillars of white light, with a sort of arrowy motion, from a dark cloud above the sea; their colour varied, in ascending, from that of silver to a faint orange, and then a very delicate green: and sometimes the motion was changed, and they chased each other *along* the edge of the cloud, with a dazzling brightness and rapidity. I was almost startled by seeing them *there* again; and after so long an interval of thoughts and years, it was like the effect produced by a sudden burst of familiar and yet long-forgotten music."

"I did not observe any object of interest on my voyage from Wales, excepting a new beacon at the extremity of the Liverpool Rock, and which I thought a good deal like the pictures of the Eddystone light-house. There was something to me particularly stern and solemn in its

appearance, as it rose darkly against a very wild sky, like a 'pillar of cloud' with a capital of deep-coloured fire: but perhaps the gloom and stormy effect of the evening might have very much aided the impression left upon my fancy."

"Your opinion of the 'Spirit's Return' has given me particular pleasure, because I prefer that poem to anything else I have written: but if there be, as my friends say, a greater power in it than I had before evinced, I paid dearly for the discovery, and it almost made me tremble as I sounded 'the deep places' of my soul."

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* "I have just been much struck with this passage, from a work of the late John Bowdler's:

* I cannot but point to this passage as indicating the first dawning of that healthier and loftier state of mind, to which Mrs. Hemans rose during the few last years of her life. She had always been submissive to

I cannot help, in some measure, applying it to myself:—'Could the veil which now separates us from futurity be drawn aside, and those regions of everlasting happiness and sorrow which strike so faintly on the imagination be presented fully to our eyes, it would occasion, I doubt not, a sudden and strange revolution in our estimate of things. Many are the distresses for which we now weep in suffering or sympathy, that would awaken us to songs of thanksgiving; many the dispensations which now seem dreary and inexplicable, that would fill our adoring hearts with thanksgiving and joy.'"

"Truly, in this capital to the land of Prose, there is not much to gratify a feeling for the beautiful; but I should have liked you to have been with me a few days since, when I went to

the vicissitudes of her lot: but she had yet to learn to contemplate them with serenity.

visit a monument by Thorwaldsen, lately arrived here. It represents a dying female, supported by her husband, who is bending over her. Nothing can be more admirable than the perfect *abandon* of her figure, the utter, desolate helplessness of the sinking head and hands, so true and yet so graceful: it is like looking at a broken flower. But, unfortunately, the sculptor has thought proper to introduce a *man with wings* and an hour-glass, at the foot of the couch, looking not one bit more ideal than the man without wings at the head. Now I never could, in my severest illness and most visionary state of mind, imagine either Time or Eternity entering my room with the doctor or one of my brothers, and standing at my bed-side: and I heartily wish that some skilful exorcist would banish these evil genii from the realms of painting and sculpture altogether, and lay them quietly, with other goblins, at the bottom of the Red Sea." . . . .

Mrs. Hemans' dislike to all allegorical personification was great. I hardly remember, even in her very earliest poems,—written at the time when, paradoxical as it may seem, the most artificial forms and images are most in request—a single instance of her having recourse to the Muses, or the Graces, or the Virtues, or any of the established divinities. In another letter, written about this time, she gaily says, "I quite agree with you as to personification in poetry. I would send them all, from the 'Nymph with placid eye,' even to 'Inoculation, heavenly maid,' along with the marble Times and Eternities, down the Red Sea, for ever and a day."

The next note, it will be seen, refers to the same subject.

"My dear ———,

"I was very remiss in not sooner acknowledging the arrival of the little parcel duly conveyed by Claude, and thus causing you so much additional trouble; but I came home late and

tired on Friday evening, which prevented my writing, and I had a vague idea I should see some of you on Sunday.

"I went with Mrs. ——— to town the other day, and found she was going to visit Thorwaldsen's work. I was sorry to relinquish the idea of seeing it with you, but its beauty, truth, and simplicity charmed me greatly. The only thing I disliked was the *man with wings*, whom I thought very inferior to the *man without them*, on the other side of the monument; but the perfect *abandon* of the dying figure is admirable. I think the subject you suggested for sculpture, though a very noble one, would rather want some central point, something for the eye and mind to rally round at once. What can we have for the principal figure? We must decide upon this point when next we meet, which I hope will be very soon. Poor Goëthe! how sad to think that so calmly bright a career should have so stormy a close! It will be almost like parting with a familiar face to know that he is indeed

gone. I had read the passage to which you refer in 'Carlyle,' and mentioned it to my informant, on the subject of his infidelity; but no argument could pierce through the thick mantle of self-complacency in which he had been pleased to wrap himself." . . .

The prospect of Goëthe's death was a thing deeply to affect one who valued his writings with such entire and reverential sincerity as Mrs. Hemans. A few months previous to this time, she had collected the best of her poems, with the intention of offering them to the sage of Weimar: some chance or misadventure, however, prevented their reaching their destination.

. . . . "Have you seen Rogers' 'Italy,' with its exquisite embellishments? The whole book seems to me quite a triumph of art and taste; some of Turner's Italian scenes, with their moon-lit vestibules and pillared arcades, the

shadows of which seem almost trembling on the ground as you look at them, really might be fit representations of Armida's enchanted gardens: and there is one view of the temples of Pæstum, standing in their severe and lonely grandeur on the shore, and lit up by a flash of lightning, which brought to my mind those lines of Byron,

> ——— 'As I gazed, the place
> Became Religion, and the heart ran o'er
> With silent worship of the great of old.' "

. . . . "I have not yet read Northcote's Life of Titian, but I was much struck with a passage I lately saw quoted from it, relating to that piercing intellectual *eagle-look* which I have so often remarked in Titian's portraits. 'It is the intense personal character,' Northcote says, 'which gives the superiority to those portraits over all others, and stamps them with a living and permanent interest. Whenever you turn to look at them, they appear to be looking at you.

There seems to be some question pending between you, as if an intimate friend or an inveterate foe were in the room with you. They exert a kind of fascinating power, and there is that exact resemblance in individual nature which is always new and always interesting.' I suppose it was a feeling of this kind which made Fuseli exclaim on seeing Titian's picture of Paul the Third with his two nephews, 'that is history!'"

. . . "The account which you sent me of the longevity of artists, (a privilege which I, at least, am far from envying them,) seemed confirmed or rather accounted for, in some degree, by a paper I was reading on the same day. It is written, with great enthusiasm, on the 'Pleasures of Painting,' and the author (Hazlitt, I believe) describes the studies of the artist as a kind of sanctuary, a 'city of refuge' from worldly strife, envy and littleness; and his communion with nature as sufficient to fill the void,

and satisfy all the cravings of heart and soul. I wonder if this indeed *can* be; I should like to go by night with a magician to the Coliseum, (as Benvenuto Cellini did,) and call up the spirits of those mighty Italian artists, and make them all tell me whether they had been happy; but it would not do to forget, as he also did (have you ever read those strange memoirs of his?) the spell by which the ghosts were laid, as the consequences were extremely disagreeable." . .

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* . . . . . "I am taking lessons in music from James Z. Herrmann, who comes to me

* This gentleman, an artist in the best sense of the word, had already set two of Mrs. Hemans' songs to music of a very high order. The "Far away" is one of the most exquisite things we have in the shape of music joined with English words; and the "Dirge at Sea," (though almost placed out of popular reach by the difficulty of its accompaniment,) is a noble and characteristic song to some of her most spirited words. Opportunity and energy are alone wanting to place Mr. Herrmann in the first rank of modern composers.

every week, and I should like him as a master exceedingly, were it not that I am sure I give him the *toothache* whenever I play a wrong note, and a sympathising pang immediately shoots through my own compassionate heart. I am learning Pergolesi's noble 'Stabat Mater,' which realizes all that I could *dream* of religious music, and which derives additional interest from its being the last work in which the master-spirit breathed forth its enthusiasm." . . .

. . . . . "Since I last wrote to you, I have received a visit from a remarkable person, with whom I should like to make you acquainted. . . . . His mind is full, even to overflowing, of intelligence and original thought. It is ——, the distinguished linguist, of whom I shall speak: besides his calling upon me, I also passed an evening in his society, and he talked to me the whole time. I do not know when I have

heard such a flow of varying conversation—odd —original—brilliant—animating;—*any* and *every* one of these epithets might be applied to it; it is like having a *flood of mind* poured out upon you, and that, too, evidently from the strong necessity of setting the current free, not from any design to shine or overpower. I think I was most interested in his descriptions of Spain, a country where he has lived much, and to which he is strongly attached; he spoke of the songs which seem to *fill* the airs of the south, from the constant improvisation of the people at their work; he described as a remarkable feature of the scenery the little rills and water-courses which were led through the fields and gardens, and even over every low wall, by the Moors of Andalusia, and which yet remain, making the whole country vocal with pleasant sounds of waters; he told me also several striking anecdotes of a bandit chief in Murcia, a sort of Spanish Rob Roy, who has carried on his predatory warfare there for many years, and is so

adored by the peasantry, for whose sake he plunders the rich, that it is impossible for the government ever to seize upon him. Some expressions of the old Biscayan language, the *Basque* he called it, which he translated for me, I thought beautifully poetical. The sun is called, in that language, 'that which pours the day,' and the moon, 'the light of the dead.' Well, from Spain he travelled, or rather *shot off*, like Robin Good-fellow, who could

> 'put a girdle round about the earth
> In forty minutes.'

away to Iceland, and told me of his having seen there a MS. recording the visit of an Icelandic prince to the court of our old Saxon king, Athelstan—then to Paris—(not the Iceland prince, but——)—Brussels—Warsaw—with a sort of '*Open Sesame*,' for the panorama of each court and kingdom. All I had to complain of was, that, being used to a sort of steam-boat rapidity, both in bodily and mental movements, ——,

while gallantly handing me from one room to another, rushed into a sort of *gallopade* which nearly took my breath away. On mentioning this afterwards to a gentleman who had been of the party, he said, 'What could you expect from a man who has been handing *armed Croats* instead of ladies, from one tent to another? for I believe it is not very long since my ubiquitous friend visited Hungary.' A striking contrast to all this, was a visit I lately paid to old Mr. Roscoe, who may be considered quite as the father of literature in this part of the world, though it must be owned that his *child* is at present in anything but a flourishing state. However, he is a delightful old man, with a fine Roman style of head, which he had adorned with a green velvet cap to receive me in, because, as he playfully said, 'he knew I always admired him in it.' Altogether he put me rather in mind of one of Rembrandt's pictures, and as he sat in his quiet study, surrounded by busts, and books, and flowers, and with a beautiful cast of

Canova's Psyche in the back-ground, I thought that a painter who wished to make old age look touching and venerable, could not have had a better subject. I must, however, confess my ill-behaviour, notwithstanding all the respect with which the scene inspired me. The good old gentleman was showing me a series of engravings from the early Italian masters, and pointing out very gravely the characteristic differences of style, when, all at once, upon his unrolling one which represents Hercules distressingly placed between a dowdy Virtue, and a great fat Pleasure, I was so strongly reminded of a scene which you may remember, that I burst into a fit of uncontrollable laughter. Mr. Roscoe, a good deal perplexed apparently, asked the cause, and as it was impossible to explain to him the whole mystery, I could only reply, looking as good as I could, 'that it really was impossible to help laughing at Pleasure's *gouty-looking* feet.'"

. . . . "I send you two pamphlets by Mr. Julius Hare, (a friend of Wordsworth's,) which I think you will admire for their high tone of eloquence; although the subject of one of them, the Defence of Niebuhr,* will probably not interest you much more than it did myself. There are, however, some noble passages, translated from 'Niebuhr's Appeal to the German People,' which almost, as Sir Philip Sidney said of Chevy Chace, 'stir the heart like the sound of a trumpet.' The other work of Mr.

* At this time Mrs. Hemans only regarded Niebuhr as one of the iconoclasts—as merely a sceptical inquirer into the traditions of antiquity; and it will be remembered with what small complacency or toleration she was prepared to regard any destroyer of the ancient legends in which her imagination took such great delight. The details of the Roman historian's private life, the traits of his character, which have shown to us the simple and amiable man, as well as the severe and laborious scholar, had not then been given to the public.

Hare's is a sermon called 'the Children of Light.'" . . . .

. . . . "Since I wrote last, I have been quite confined to the house, but before I caught my last very judicious cold, I went to see an exquisite piece of sculpture, which has been lately sent to this neighbourhood from Rome, by Gibson, with whose name as an artist you are most likely familiar. It is a statue of Sappho, representing her at the moment she receives the tidings of Phaon's desertion. I think I prefer it to almost anything I ever saw of Canova's, as it possesses all his delicacy and beauty of form, but is imbued with a far deeper sentiment. There is a sort of *willowy* drooping in the figure which seems to express a weight of unutterable sadness, and one sinking arm holds the lyre so carelessly, that you almost fancy it will drop while you gaze. Altogether, it seems to speak

piercingly and sorrowfully of the nothingness of fame, at least to woman. There was a good collection of pictures in the same house, but they were almost unaccountably vulgarized in my sight by the presence of the lonely and graceful statue." . . . . .

. . . . "I send you a number of the Athenæum, (which seems almost the best literary journal of the day,) for the sake of an account it contains of the Necker family and Madame de Staël, which I think particularly interesting. From the style, I imagine it to be written by a friend of mine, Miss Jewsbury. . . . . I send another number, in which I think you will read with interest a paper, by the sudden appearance of which, with the portentous title 'Felicia Hemans,' I was somewhat startled yesterday morning. Some parts of it are, however, beautifully written, though I hope you will quite enter into my feelings when I utterly disclaim all wish for

the post of "Speaker to the Feminine Literary House of Commons."* . . . . .

. . . . "I have been reading a great deal during all this gloomy winter, and have been charmed lately by an account of the life of my favourite musician, Weber,† with extracts from his letters;

* In spite of the fault of taste in its very first sentence, here alluded to by Mrs. Hemans, the character in question (from the pen of Miss Jewsbury) is written with great truth, and elegance, and discrimination. It would be superfluous to quote from it, save, perhaps, the fanciful simile in its closing paragraph. "She is a permanent accession to the literature of her country; she has strengthened intellectual refinement, and beautified the cause of virtue. The superb creeping-plants of America often fling themselves across the arms of mighty rivers, uniting the opposite banks by a blooming arch: so should every poet do to truth and goodness—so has Felicia Hemans often done, and been, poetically speaking, a bridge of flowers."

† In the Foreign Quarterly Review.

the flow of affectionate feeling in these, the love he everywhere manifests of excellence *for its own sake*, the earnestness and truth of heart revealed in all his actions,—these things make up a character, like his own music, of perfect harmony. Is it not delightful, a foundation of gladness to our own hearts, when we are able to love what we *admire?* I shall play the waltz, and those beautiful airs from Der Freischutz, with tenfold pleasure after reading the memoir." . . . .

. . . . " I was much interested a few days ago in looking over some beautiful engravings of antique English portraits. I wonder whether you were ever impressed by what struck me much during an examination of them, the superior character of *repose* by which they are distinguished from the portraits of the present day. I found this, to a certain degree, the predominant trait in every one of them; not any

thing like *nonchalance* or apathy, but a certain high-minded self-possession, something like what I think the 'Opium Eater' calls 'the brooding of the majestic intellect over all.' I scarcely ever see a trace of this quiet, yet *stately* sweetness in the expression of modern portraits; they all look so eager, so restless, so trying to be *éveillé;* I wonder if this is owing to the feverish excitement of the times in which we live, for I should suppose that the world has never been in such a hurry during the whole course of its life before." . . . .

. . . . "I wish I could be with you to see Young's performance of Hamlet, of all Shakspeare's characters the one which interests me most; I suppose from the never-ending conjectures in which it involves one's mind. Did I ever mention to you Goëthe's beautiful remark upon it? He says, that Hamlet's naturally gentle and tender spirit, overwhelmed with its mighty tasks

and solemn responsibilities, is like a China vase, fit only for the reception of delicate flowers, but in which an oak tree has been planted, the roots of the strong tree expand, and the fair vase is shivered." . . . .

. . . . " I have lately met with an exquisite little book, a work upon the Classics, just published, by Henry Coleridge; it is written with all the fervour and much of the rich imagination and flow of 'words that burn,' which characterize the writings of his celebrated relative." . . . .

. . . . " Some Quarterly Reviews have lately been sent to me, one of which contains an article on Byron, by which I have been deeply and sorrowfully impressed; his character, as there pourtrayed, reminded me of some of those old eastern cities, where travellers constantly find a squalid mud hovel built against the ruins of a gorgeous temple; for, alas! the best part of that

fearfully mingled character is but ruin—the wreck of *what might have been.*" . . . .

. . . . "I hope you observed in one of the Edinburgh Journals, which I lately sent you on that account, a precious theory of a distinguished engineer, that all the Cyclops of old were *Light-Houses.* So I suppose Ulysses only blew out the *lantern*, on a memorable occasion celebrated in the Odyssey: but then how the light-house Polyphemus came to run about the shore in that extraordinary manner, and made such a noise that he awoke all his brothers and cousin-beacons along the coast, Mr. Stevenson, the engineer, ought, I think, to have explained." . . . . . .

Mrs. Hemans writes of Howitt's "Book of the Seasons" as "a little book which has quite charmed me. Do you know, I think that the

rumours of political strife and convulsion now ringing round us on all sides, make the spirit long more intensely for the freshness and purity and stillness of nature, and take deeper delight in everything that recalls these lovely images. I am sure I shall forget all sadness, and feel as happy as a child, or a *fawn*, when I can be free again amongst hills and woods. I long for them 'as the hart for the water-brooks.'" . . . .

. . . . "I think you will have pleasure in reading the lines which have been lately addressed to me, by Dr. Butler, of Shrewsbury, whose name, as that of an elegant classic scholar, I dare say is familiar to you: I should be sorry not to distinguish such a tribute from . . . . . and other effusions of the Poly-*treacle* school." . . . . .

Few writers have been approached with so much homage in rhyme as Mrs. Hemans. Most

of it was sickly and foolish enough to merit her whimsical epithet: every now and then, however, she was touched by an effusion of pure feeling uttered in graceful verse, which showed all the brighter in contrast with other tributes she received. I believe the verses which she preferred above the rest, were some lines by Mrs. C. G. Godwin, which appeared in one of the annuals: but they could hardly be more heart-warm or welcome, than the poems,—for there are more than one,—addressed to her by her faithful and enthusiastic friend, Miss Jewsbury. A stanza or two from one of these may not be out of place here.

"I know thee but a form of earth,
I know thy wondrous mind,
Linked ever by its tears and mirth
To all of earthly kind;
A flower's thy strength, a child's thy glee,
And all thy moods of heart,
Though restless as the billowy sea,
In beauty come and part.

Thou art of earth in mind and will,
Yet a soul's spell, a vision still.

* * * * *

For thee, in knightly days of old
Would many a lance have rung,
And minstrels at the revel bold
Thy beauty's triumphs sung;
But nobler far thy present meed,
Famed with a mother's fame,
And made to household hearts a need,
Than all Romance may name,
I called thee Rose, I called thee well,
But woman's is thine own sweet spell."

Lays of Leisure Hours.

The next extract is without a date, but may be introduced here as accompanying a short series of letters to the same correspondent.

TO MR. L——.

"My dear Sir,

"I could not but pity the unhappy state in which you must have concluded your last letter, with such a chorus as you describe beneath the windows; in similar circumstances I lately sent out a servant to say that there was a sick lady in the house, who would infallibly expire at the very next *blast* of song, and the bagpipe, (for such was the leader of the barbaric crew,) with a humanity greater than could have been expected from its savage education, immediately departed. One sometimes *does* hear a sweet female voice among a wandering band, and then I think the ideas of desolation and homelessness, with which it is associated, makes the sounds very touching: one such voice came to my ears lately on a very stormy evening: it was uncultivated, as you may suppose, but had a mournful and piercing sweetness, which, mingling as it did with the fitful gusts of the storm, lingered some time in my imagination, and

gave rise to the little song* I enclose: if you think it suitable to music it shall be your own, as no one has yet seen it. . . . . I dined the other day . . . . . O what a day! what a crew of men! Had I possessed the power of the Enchantress Queen in the Arabian Nights, I should certainly, like her majesty, have taken a little water in my hand, and throwing it by turns in the face of each, have exclaimed, according to the necromantic formula, 'Quit the human form which thou disgracest, and assume that of an ox:' by these desirable means, had they been in my power, some insufferable

* This was "To a wandering female singer."

* * *

Thou hast wept, and thou hast parted,
Thou hast been forsaken long,
Thou hast watched for steps that came not back,
I know it by thy song.

* * * *

These lines are published among Mrs. Hemans' Poetical Remains.

men would have been got rid of, and some very good oxen (I have no doubt) joined to society.* I long to see your song of the Cid, which I feel assured will be, as Sir Walter Scott somewhere says, 'a strain to turn back the flight;' neither the words of that or the other piece have been promised to any one, and you know I prefer their being accompanied by your music to any other attendance.". . . . . .

About this time, Mrs. Hemans began to derive great pleasure from the discovery of a power which is always more or less possessed by those of a nature as musical as hers; that of composing melodies; or,—to speak critically,—

* In referring to a similar party in another letter, she says quaintly, "I can well conceive your sufferings yesterday; the remembrance of my own on a *nearly* similar occasion, when I was '*bounded on the east,*' as geographers say, by ———, is yet but too vivid." . . . .

of putting together into a rhythmical form, such wandering and unclaimed fragments of music as float through the memory—in fact, the difficulty is always rather to note down such fancies than to originate them.

"The newly-discovered power," she says in a letter, "if such it may be called, to which I have alluded, is that of composing melodies, by which I have been visited in the strangest manner. I have really succeeded in putting down a great many airs to lyric pieces of my own, which, though simple, as you may suppose, yet seem to me to express the character of the words. Mr. L ——, to whom I showed them, was so much pleased, that he has kindly arranged them with symphonies and accompaniments, arrayed in which drapery they really make quite an imposing appearance, and I anticipate much pleasure in playing them to you, though I dare say I shall be visited with some nervous terrors when that awful moment arrives. But they have been really a great delight to me,

amidst a thousand annoyances which, as the Latin Grammar sagely observes, 'now to enumerate would be tedious.' I dare say Columbus was not much more rejoiced on discovering the New World, than I, when I had really caught and *caged* my first melody." . . .

TO MR. L——.

"March 5th, 1831.

"My dear Sir,

"I send you the last song of our set. I remember you wished for a boat-song, and I think this will be susceptible (I am sure that it is a wrong word, but I have no other word at hand) of good musical effect, which you will give so well. I hope you will find no *family likenesses* between *b's* and *l's* and *v's* strong enough to produce a Comedy of Errors. I return your musical Bijou; and feeling myself the happy possessor of two copies of last year's, I beg your acceptance of the one which accompanies

your own back. The *stream of melody* has been in such full flow since you were here that I think my being on the eve of departure is rather a fortunate circumstance for you, as otherwise these new inspirations would leave you no prospect of a quiet life. If you have no better engagement, do you think you could come here on Sunday evening? That monster known by the name of the *People* is tormenting me at present to such a degree, that I scarcely know when I shall have another evening. That 'mighty minster's bell,' really sounds so magnificent, that I am *sure* my story of the French *artiste* with the *sauce piquante* and the old slippers, *must* be a case exactly in point. . . A painful suspicion is flashing over my mind that I am beginning to write more illegibly than ever. Before my words, therefore, are lost in a vapour of sublime obscurity,

"Believe me very truly yours,

"F. H."

TO MR. L———.

" March 20th, 1831.

" My dear Sir,

" I have been making a *noble effort* to put down some of these melodies intelligibly, so as to save you some part of the very irksome task you have so kindly imposed upon yourself. I tried to perform this mighty deed according to the plan you recommended, and shall be very glad if you think I have given some token of dawning reason, and if any of the airs seem to you worth arranging. My own favourite is the Italian girl's hymn, though I cannot make myself at all certain that it does not belong to some injured person whom I have unintentionally plundered. Do tell me if this measure would be intractable for composition.

' A voice of prayer arose
Through evening's bright repose,
When the sea-fight was done:
The sons of England knelt,
With hearts that now could melt,
For on the wave the battle had been won.

Round their tall ship the main
Heaved with a dark red stain,
Caught not from sunset's cloud;
While with the tide swept past
Pennon and shivered mast,
Which to the Ocean Queen that day had bowed.'

"I wrote the piece a short time since with the title of 'Prayer at Sea,' and was more pleased with it than I often am with my own performances. I should particularly like to have it set by you, if you do not object to the matter, as otherwise I fear it will be caught and sacrificed by some ignoble hand.

. . . . . .

"A *parenthesis* in my letter occasioned by a visit *three hours* long, has completely driven out of my mind all the rest that I had to say. I am so wearied now, that I conclude like an Italian scena—*non posso più.*

"Ever truly yours, &c.

"F. H."

TO MR. L———.

"March 22nd, 1831.

"My dear Sir,

"I am very glad that you perceive some signs of advancing intellect in my musical MS.—and still more rejoiced that you consent to rescue the lines I now inclose from their impending ruin.

"I have the pleasure to inform you that you have attained a degree of indistinctness positively *sublime* in the name of the day upon which you promise to visit me next. I was, as the Lady Cherubina says in the Heroine, 'terribly ill off for mysteries,' before the arrival of your note; but this deficiency is now most happily supplied. Reasoning from analogy instead of wisdom, (is not that a sentence worthy of ——— himself?) I should conclude it to be *Tuesday*, but then it has, if my senses fail me not, a dotted *i*: it seems to have rather too many letters for *Friday*, and into *Wednesday* it cannot be metamorphosed, even on

the antiquarian system that 'consonants are changeable at pleasure and vowels go for nothing.' 'The force of nature can no further go;' therefore, I return the awful hieroglyphic for your inspection, and unless it should be intended to emulate that celebrated hand of Mr. Jeffrey's, 'which is neither to be read by himself or any one *else*,' I beg for some further light."

"March 31st, 1831.

"My dear Mr. ——,

"I was not able to send you the book yesterday, but it does itself the pleasure of waiting upon you this morning, and is accompanied by a Literary Souvenir, which I beg you to accept and keep 'for ever and a day' in remembrance of me. I also send you a relic which I am sure you will value, a note of Reginald Heber's, with some advice respecting the plot of a tragedy on

which I had consulted him: as I have several other papers and letters of his, I can well spare you this, and am sure that no one will prize it more.

"I am beginning to be much engaged with the troublesome preparations for my departure. Certainly poetry is a mere 'waif and stray' in this work-day world of ours; when I find my unfortunate self surrounded by trunks and boxes, and packing cases, and bills and accounts, and other such uncouth monsters, I get perfectly bewildered, and wonder into what terra incognita I have been transported. Is it not very disagreeable to waken out of one's pleasant ideal world, and find that one *must* do things for one's self after all, and notwithstanding all the protestations of a hundred knights and squires who declare that their 'swords shall leap out of the scabbard' at a single word, in one's cause?—Pray are you at all superstitious? I am perfectly haunted by an ominous verse of Campbell's—

'The boat hath left a stormy land,
A stormy sea before her;
*But O, too strong for human hand,
The tempest gathered o'er her.'

and wonder what it bodes me. I am expecting one pleasure in the midst of all these plagues, a visit from my old friend Sir ——, who is coming to see me next week on his way to town. If I have an opportunity, I should like to introduce him to you. He is to dine with the King on the 1st of April, and with me I hope (what a piquant contrast!) on the 6th." . . . . .

TO MR. L———.

"April 3rd, 1831.

"My dear Sir,

"I send you the other volume of Shelley,

* The two last lines have been added to make the quotation clear to those, if such there be, who may not happen to be familiar with the verse: it is from "Lord Ullin's Daughter."

which I stupidly forgot to bring yesterday. I think you will admire the earnest eloquence of Mrs. Shelley's preface; and the lines written in the Bay of Naples seem to me quite a union of music and picture in poetry. Can anything be more beautiful than

> 'The *lightning* of the noon-tide ocean
> Is flashing round me, and I hear
> The music of its measured motion?'

I do not think I can leave this *città dolente* (Wavertree, I mean, for I must remain in Liverpool some days longer) until Saturday next, so that I hope you will have quite time to read all that is interesting in the volume. When I returned home yesterday, I indulged the *incendiary* tastes I had confessed to you, by making a large bonfire of letters. The quantity of sentiment that went to heap the pyre was prodigious, and would, I am sure, have filled 'twelve French romances, neatly gilt.' Did you observe any lurid tinge of conflagration in the skies above ——? Amongst

these records, half-melancholy, half ludicrous, of past follies and fancies and *dreams*, I found two letters from ———, which I thought had been destroyed long since. I was going to add them to my beacon-fire, but I thought, as curious traits of character, I would show them to you first. Can you conceive anything so *innately*, so *unutterably* vulgar, as the style of mind they betray? the attempt at patronage, the low-bred enumeration of great names, which, so arranged, almost remind me of the list in the Bath Guide,

> 'Lord Cram and Lord Vultur,
> Sir Brandish O'Cultur,
> With Marshal Carowzer
> And old Lady Mouser.'

I answered these precious documents, certainly without unpoliteness, but with some portion of what Miss Jewsbury calls my '*passive disdain*,' a quality in which she considers me particularly rich. If you will bring them with you to-morrow evening, we will make another conflagration." . . . .

TO MR. L——.

"April 6th, 1831.

"My dear Sir,

"I return [to you the very interesting collection of Mr. ——'s drawings, which I had great pleasure in looking over yesterday evening. I only regret that there were no names to them, as I am prevented from particularising those which I most admired; but I recognized Tivoli, and was especially struck with one representing the interior of a church. There is also an exquisite little hermitage buried among trees, where I should like to pass at least a month after all my late fatigues, and hear nothing but the sound of leaves and waters, and now and then some pleasant voice of a friend. I did not quite understand a message which Henry brought me about the dedication or advertisement to those drawings. Did Mr. —— wish to ask my opinion of it? I am just the reverse of Iago, who calls himself '*nothing if not cri-*

tical,' but it seems to me that there is some little awkwardness in the commencement. 'Making the following drawings,' has rather an abrupt sound for the opening of a sentence, has it not? I cannot help feeling interested in Mr. —— from all I have heard you say of him; and, if you think it would gratify him, I would send you a few lines to be prefixed to this work, in which I should try to express in poetry what I imagine he wishes to convey—that the spirit of the artist was wandering over the sunny fields of Italy, whilst he himself was confined to the bed of sickness. I could not do it very soon, as I am likely to be hurried for some time, but probably he does not wish to publish his work immediately. . . . . I fear I *must* give up the concert, I feel so inexpressibly weary from having to superintend a thousand things which I never thought of in my life before. I will try to have my harp sent to your care in a day or two, and I will also trouble you with the charge of some music-books. I send you a letter of Campbell's for your collection. I must only beg

you to keep it for yourself, and not to give it away."

TO MR. L———.

"April 10, 1831.

"I find that I must trouble you with the care of several more Italian books. I was compelled to choose between Tasso and Ariosto, and fear you will hardly approve my preference of the former, but there is much in the story of his sufferings which intensely interests me, and, perhaps, deepens my reverence for his poetry.

"Will you laugh, or pity me a little, when I tell you that I absolutely *cried* this morning from mere fatigue? I think I never, not even in times of real affliction, felt my spirits so exhausted as at present. I would give anything to be going into the country, and to live among trees and flowers till I feel the spirit of poetry come back again—it is quite put to flight by petty cares, which I think are almost as much at

variance with it as fashionable dinners. There is a most severe and really well-written review in Fraser's Magazine this month, upon Moore's life of Byron." . . . . .

TO MR. L. ———.

" April 19, 1831.

" My dear Sir,

" I cannot tell you how much I shall value your beautiful token of remembrance:* nothing could be at once so acceptable to my tastes, and so delightfully associated with all my recollections of you as this glorious opera; and I quite agree with you that it is impossible for anything so essentially full of beauty, so composed 'for eternity,' *ever* to become hackneyed to feeling and imagination, notwithstanding its countless wrongs from the hands of Goths, Vandals, and young ladies. You must not suppose, however, —though I shall treasure this book more than all the others of my musical library—that I shall

* The Opera of Tancredi.

need anything to remind me of you. One so haunted as I am by the ceaseless cry of 'Alone, alone,' retains no transitory remembrance of those who have had power sometimes to bid that voice be silenced.

"You will be surprised to hear, that notwithstanding my healthful looks, of which you so cruelly informed me yesterday morning, Dr. ———, who visited me after you were gone, positively forbid the intended excursion to Ince,* and gave me most serious admonitions with regard to that complaint of the heart from which I suffer. He says that nothing but great care and perfect quiet will prevent its assuming a dangerous character; and I told him that he might as well prescribe me the *powdered diamonds* which physicians of the olden time ordered for royal patients. I must own that this has somewhat deepened the melancholy impressions under which I am going to Ireland, for I cannot but feel assured that *he is right.*

* The seat of Henry Blundell, Esq., famous for its fine collection of statuary.

"Will you not dislike . . . . more than ever when I tell you that our friend Mr. Roscoe is actually to be deprived of a pension which he received from the Royal Society of Literature? I learned this from the Mr. ———, whom I told you I expected to see, but he begged me not to make it generally known at present. Mathias also, one of our most distinguished Italian scholars, now a very old man in narrow circumstances, is to undergo a similar privation. Is it not a *miserable* piece of economy in an English king to retrench a thousand a-year (for *all* these literary pensions amounted to no more) from men of letters in advanced age? I feel quite grieved about Mr. Roscoe, for besides that I am afraid he can ill spare it, the wound to his feelings seemed to be so great. I can scarcely think of it without tears, when I recollect his touching expression of feebleness united with so much that is venerable. I mean to sail, if I possibly can, to-morrow, and shall write to you as soon as I am a little settled in Dublin, where I hope we shall meet in the

autumn. I have had a very good account of my two boys; I am quite amused to hear from their master, that little —— has already excited a general musical taste in the school, and has actually persuaded all the boys to subscribe for a music-master." . . . . . .

CHAPTER VI.

Mrs. Hemans' departure from England—Letters from Kilkenny—Catholic and Protestant animosity—Pictures at Lord Ormonde's—Visit to Woodstock—Parallel between the poems of Mrs. Hemans and Mrs. Tighe—Raphael's great Madonna—Kilfane—Water-birds—Deserted churchyard—Visit to a Convent—Passage in Symmons' Translation of the Agamemnon — Kilkenny — Irish politics — "The Death-song of Alcestis"—Dublin Musical Festival —Paganini—"Napoleon's Midnight Review"—Further Anecdotes of Paganini—Letters from the county Wicklow—Glendalough—The Devil's Glen—Wood scenery—Letters from Dublin—Miniature by Robertson—Society of Dublin—"The Swan and the Skylark"—Difficulty in procuring new books.

In the spring of 1831, Mrs. Hemans took leave of England, for the last time. From this point,

therefore, my memorials of her life and literary pursuits (always inseparably connected) must, of necessity, be slighter than those of the time of daily personal intercourse. But it was her happy fortune, wherever she went, to attach a few faithful friends to her, and it was her nature to prefer the society of those few to the success and celebrity which she might, at will, have commanded in wider and more brilliant circles. To one of the small household band which she drew around her in Dublin, I am largely indebted for details of the manner of her life and the direction of her mind, during the last years of her pilgrimage; and for extracts from that familiar correspondence, in which she loved to journalize the thoughts and impressions of the passing hours, for the benefit of those for the time nearest and dearest to her. Her more general letters to her friends in England will readily be distinguished from these.

After a short stay in Dublin, Mrs. Hemans paid a visit to her brother, who was then stationed in the county of Kilkenny. The follow-

ing letters were written while she was under his roof.

TO MR. L——.

"Hermitage, near Kilkenny, June 21, 1831.

"My dear Sir,

"The sight of your letter awoke in me, I can assure you, not a few 'compunctious visitings,' as I think you must have imagined I had forgot past times and all your kindness to me. This is, however, far from having been the case; I have again and again both spoken of you and thought of you, and intended to write; but I can give you no idea of the strange, unsettled, agitated life I have been leading since I came to this country: obliged, amidst a thousand inward anxieties, to give my time and attention to the claims of a new society; and perpetually interrupted by a state of health more tremulous than usual. I must not lead you to suppose that I have been altogether unhappy since my leaving

England: I have, on the contrary, found more of happiness and true kindness here than I have expected—still peace and leisure have been far from me, and I have scarcely been able to write a line." . . . .

"Hermitage, Kilkenny, June, 22nd, 1831.

. . . . "I arrived here on Saturday last. I left Dublin with great regret, for amidst many anxieties much and unexpected happiness had met me there. . . . . My brother is still in Clare, but we expect him very shortly. ——— is a perfect heroine: she has sent her men servants out of the house to make room for my boys; and we are quite unprotected except by my brother's name. I must say, *I* feel sometimes a little nervous at night, particularly after hearing of the attacks made upon houses to procure arms, with which our dwelling is known to be amply supplied. . . . . This county is, however, tolerably quiet; but the spirit of hatred existing between Protestant and

Papist, is what I could never have conceived had I not visited these scenes. Yesterday evening I was taking a quiet walk beside the beautiful river Nore, everything looking bright, and still, and peaceful around me, when I met one of my brother's men there with pistols stuck in his belt, which I was told he always carried, *on account of his being a Protestant.* I asked a young clergyman who visits us to attend me to a Catholic place of worship, as I wished to hear the service; he said that he would most willingly escort me anywhere else, and, as far as his own feelings were concerned, would go with me even there, but probably the consequence would be the desertion of almost all his congregation. You may imagine that I did not choose to press the point. I hope in my next letter to send you the lines on Naples. I cannot tell you how much I regret being of so little use to you this year; but my life, in this land of agitation, has partaken of all that characterises the country. I have indeed found some hap-

piness, for which I am grateful, but no peace, no leisure—and have been scarcely able to write a line. Still I love Ireland, and feel that I shall do so still more. My health has *not* improved lately.

"I am most faithfully yours,

"F. H."

. . . . "I saw a few beautiful pictures at Lord Ormonde's the other day. One of those which struck me the most was a Madonna of Corregio's; so still, so earnest, so *absorbed* in its expression of holy love, that it realized my deepest conception of the character. What I thought most remarkable was, that all this expression is given to a countenance with nearly *closed* eyes, for the eyelids fall so heavily—I should rather say *softly*, over them." . . .

. . . . "I wish to give you an account of a rather interesting day which I lately passed,

before its images become faint in my recollection. We went to Woodstock, the place where the late Mrs. Tighe, whose poetry has always been very touching to my feelings, passed the latest years of her life, and near which she is buried. The scenery of the place is magnificent, of a style which I think I prefer to every other; wild profound glens, rich with every hue and form of foliage, and a rapid river sweeping through them, now lost and now lighting up the deep woods with *sudden* flashes of its waves. Altogether it reminded me more of Hawthornden, than any thing I have seen since—though it wants the solemn rock-pinnacles of that romantic place. I wish I could have been alone with Nature and my thoughts, but, to my surprise, I found myself the object of quite *a reception*. The Chief Justice and many other persons had been invited to meet me, and I was to be made completely the lady of the day. There was no help for it, though I never felt so much as if I wanted a *large leaf* to wrap me up and

shelter me from all curiosity and attention. Still one cannot but feel grateful for kindness, and much was shown me. I should have told you, that Woodstock is now the seat of Mr. and Lady Louisa Tighe. . . . . Amongst other persons of the party was Mr. Henry Tighe, the widower of the poetess. . . . . He had just been exercising, I found, one of his accomplishments in the translation into Latin of a little poem of mine, and I am told that his version is very elegant. We went to the tomb, 'the grave of a poetess,' where there is a monument by Flaxman: it consists of a recumbent female figure, with much of the repose, the mysterious sweetness of happy death, which is to me so affecting in monumental sculpture. There is, however, a very small *Titania*-looking sort of figure with wings, sitting at the head of the sleeper, and intended to represent Psyche, which I thought interfered wofully with the singleness of effect which the tomb would have produced: unfortunately, too, the monument is

carved in a very rough stone, which allows no delicacy of touch. That place of rest made me very thoughtful; I could not but reflect on the many changes which had brought me to the spot I had commemorated three years since, without the slightest idea of ever visiting it; and though surrounded by attention and the appearance of interest, my heart was envying the repose of her who slept there. . . . . .

. . . . . "Mr. Tighe has just sent me his Latin translation of my lines, 'The Graves of a Household.' It seems very elegant as far as I can venture to judge, but what strikes me most is the concluding thought, (so peculiarly belonging to Christianity,) and the ancient language in which it is thus embodied,

'Si nihil ulterius mundo, si sola voluptas
Esset *terrenis*—quid feret omnis Amor?'

I suppose the idea of an affection powerful and spiritual enough to oversweep the grave, (of course the beauty of such an idea belongs not

to me, but to the spirit of our faith,) is not to be found in the loftiest strain of any classic writer." . . . . . .

It could hardly be expected that such a visit as the one described in the foregoing extract should pass without its record. In an earlier letter, Mrs. Hemans had said, "I think I shall feel much interest in visiting 'the grave of a poetess.' . . . . . her poetry has always touched me greatly, from a similarity which I imagine I discover between her destiny and my own." The lyric* which was written after she had *seen* a place already visited by her in imagination, contains little more than the

* Published among the "National Lyrics," and beginning

"I stood where the lip of song lay low,
Where the dust had gathered on beauty's brow,
Where stillness hung on the heart of love,
And a marble weeper kept watch above."

thoughts intimated in the letter, versified with some additional incident and imagery: and it may be noted as amongst the curiosities of authorship, that the earlier verses, produced under the strong influence of the imagination alone, are happier, because simpler, than those which may be called the offspring of memory. "The Grave of a Poetess," (published among the "Records of Woman,") is throughout full of feeling, and of a spirit more cheerful,—because better able to raise itself above the cares, and changes, and partings of earth,—than that which breathes in the poems of the gifted but melancholy author of "Psyche." Its *moral* is comprehended in the two last stanzas.

"Thou hast left sorrow in thy song,
A voice not loud, but deep!
The glorious bowers of earth among,
How often didst thou weep!

Where couldst thou fix on mortal ground,
Thy tender thoughts and high?
Now peace the woman's heart hath found,
And joy the poet's eye!'

On turning again to the "Psyche," a poem full of musical verse, delicate thought, and happy personification, it has been impossible not to recognise the great general similarity of mind which existed between its author and Mrs. Hemans: whether in her mood of hope and buoyancy, and complete abandonment to the art in which she was so well skilled, or in her sadder hours of lonely thought, and night-watching, and melancholy "panting upon the thorns of life." The stanza, for instance, which opens the fifth canto of the "Legend of Love," has an enthusiasm and harmony of numbers common to both.

"Delightful visions of my lonely hours,
Charm of my life, and solace of my care!
Ah! would the muse but lend proportioned powers,
And give the language, equal to declare
The wonders which she bids my fancy share,
When, wrapt in her, to other worlds I fly,
See angel-forms unalterably fair,
And hear the inexpressive harmony,
That seems to float on air, and warble through the sky."

Again, in the "Verses written at the commencement of the Spring of 1802," there is a remarkable coincidence of sentiment, and even of imagery, with Mrs. Hemans' "Breathings of Spring;"* one of those poems in which her deepest and most abiding feelings were unconsciously uttered. In both the sights and sounds of the season are invoked—in both is wrought out Byron's most beautiful, yet most bitter thought,

'I turned from all she brought, *to all she could not bring!*'

but far the most fully and sweetly by the later poetess, as, turning from the "fairy-peopled world of flowers" and "the bright waters," and

. . . . . "the joyous leaves
Whose tremblings gladden many a copse and glade,"

—she asks, earnestly and sadly,

"But what awak'st thou in the *heart*, O spring!
The human heart, with all its dreams and sighs,

* Published with the "Records of Woman."

Thou, that giv'st back so many a buried thing,
Restorer of forgotten harmonies;
Fresh songs and scents break forth where'er thou art,
What wak'st thou in the heart?

"Too much, O there too much!—We know not well
Wherefore it should be thus—but, roused by thee,
What fond, strange yearnings, from the soul's deep cell
Gush for the faces we no more shall see;
How are we haunted in the wind's low tone,
By voices that are gone!

"Looks of familiar love, that never more,
Never on earth, our aching eyes shall greet,
Past words of welcome to our household door,
And vanished smiles and sounds of parted feet;
Spring, 'mid the murmurs of thy flowering trees,
Why, why reviv'st thou these?

"Vain longings for the dead!" . . . .

The parallel between the writings of Mrs. Tighe and Mrs. Hemans might be wrought out to a far greater extent; but it is better to indi-

cate than to exhaust. Those who are interested in comparative criticism will, I think, find that there is a difference of twenty years of the history of poetry between the imagery and epithets employed by these two accomplished women. In the sonnet, perhaps, Mrs. Tighe has the advantage, Mrs. Hemans never having wholly attained the power of compression which is a requisite essential to compositions of this difficult but exquisite class. On the other hand, most of the poems by the authoress of "Psyche" addressed to individuals, or written to commemorate some particular domestic trial or blessing,—sincere and earnest though they be,—are less touching than the more indistinct allusions to the tenderness of a mother, to the sweet confidence between sisters, to the reliance of woman upon him she loves worthily, and to the desolateness of heart when change or death sever any of these holy ties,—which are to be found in Mrs. Hemans' lyrics and scenes, and which may be all considered but as so many utterances of her own

feelings. How much more healthy, indeed, is the dispensation under which poets live now, when feeling and emotion are, as it were, *fused* into verse, while the sacredness of the secret heart is respected; than that under which sorrow and joy were openly parcelled out, and paraded in the "light of common day;"—when strains of lamentation for the heaviest affliction, or of that joy with which no stranger should intermeddle, were publicly poured forth, without reserve, and, may it not almost be surmised, without much deep or sincere feeling? As an instance,—let Miss Seward's pompous elegy on the death of her early-called sister, whose name, for the occasion, was refined into "Alinda," be compared with "the Graves of a Household," or the "Haunted Mansion,"—and our writers and readers will have no cause to regret the more natural days in which they live.

Before returning from this digression to correspondence and anecdote, it may be mentioned, that another proof of the deep and peculiar in-

terest with which Mrs. Hemans regarded Mrs. Tighe, may be found in a sonnet, (published among the "Poetical Remains,") on "Records of immature genius," which was written after reading some of her earlier poems in manuscript. It might be applied with strict and beautiful significance to all but the latest works of its writer.

'Oh! judge in thoughtful tenderness of those
Who, richly dowered for life, are called to die
Ere the soul's flame, through storms, hath won repose
In truth's divinest ether still and high!
Let their mind's riches claim a trustful sigh!
Deem them but sad sweet fragments of a strain,
First notes of some yet struggling harmony,
By the strong rush, the crowding joy and pain
Of many inspirations met, and held
From its true sphere." . . . . . .

. . . . "I do not think I mentioned to you hav-

ing seen, at Woodstock, a large and beautifully painted copy of Raphael's 'great Madonna,' as it is called,—the one at Dresden: I never was enabled to form so perfect an idea of this noble work before. The principal figure certainly looks the 'Queen of Heaven,' as she stands serenely upon her footstool of clouds; but there is, I think, rather a want of *human* tenderness in her calm eyes, and on her regal brow. I visited yesterday another beautiful place some miles from us. (I am very sorry that the neighbourhood has lately been seized with quite a mania of making parties for me.) Kilfane, however, the scene of yesterday's *réunion*, is a very lovely spot, quite in a different style of beauty from Woodstock; soft, rich, and pastoral-looking. Such a tone of verdure I think I never beheld anywhere: it was quite an emerald darkness, a gorgeous gloom, *brooding* over velvet turf, and deep, silent streams, from such trees as I could fancy might have grown in Armida's enchanted wood. Some swans upon the dark waters made

me think of another line of Spenser's, in which he speaks of the fair Una, as

'Making a sunshine in the shady place.'

The house contains some interesting works of art; amongst others, a very beautiful bust of Raphael, which was new to me. It is rather like what I think ——'s face might be in manhood; the eye mild and earnest, the long hair widely parted, and the noble brow with that high intellectual serenity *throned* upon it, which I cannot but consider as characterizing the loftiest order of genius." . . . .

. . . . "I forgot to tell you of a beautiful remark that I heard made lately in conversation, (it is not very often one hears anything worth recording,) it came from the Chief Justice, when I met him at Kilfane; I think it was with regard to some of Canova's beautiful sculpture in the

room, that he said, '*Is not Perfection always affecting?*' I thought he was quite right, for the highest degree of beauty in any art, certainly always excites, if not tears, at least the *inward* feeling of tears." . . .

. . . . . "The graceful play of water-birds is always particularly delightful to me; those bright creatures convey to my fancy a fuller impression of the joy of freedom than any others in nature, perhaps because they seem the lords of two elements. The enjoyment of having wings, and being able to *bathe* them too, this torrid weather, must be enviable: I have heard that in Corsica, the sun, during the dog-days, is called the 'Lion-Sun;' I am sure his present dealings with us are quite *lion-like* in their ferocity." . .

. . . "I have discovered a very striking scene in this neighbourhood since I last wrote to you—a wild and deserted Catholic churchyard; but I believe I must describe it when I write next, that I may not be too late for this day's post." . . .

. . . "I will now describe to you the scene I mentioned in my last letter as having so much impressed me. It was a little green hill, rising darkly and abruptly against a very sunny background of sloping corn-fields and woods. It appeared smooth till near the summit, but was there crested—almost *castellated* indeed—by what I took for thickly-set, pointed rocks, but, on a near approach, discovered to be old tombstones, forming quite a little 'city of the silent.' I left our car to explore it, and discovered some ruins of a very affecting character:—a small church, laid open to the sky, forsaken and moss-grown; its font lying overturned on the green sod; some of the rude ornaments themselves

but ruins. One of these, which had fallen amongst thick heath and wild-flowers, was simply a wooden cross with a female name upon it, and the inscription, 'May her soul rest in peace!' You will not wonder at the feeling which prompted me to stoop and raise it up again. My memory will often revert to that lonely spot, sacred to the hope of immortality, and touched by the deep quiet of the evening skies." . . .

. . . "I paid a visit some days ago to the convent here, but was told at the gate that I could not be admitted, as 'the ladies were not to speak a word for eight days.' In an unwonted spirit of self-congratulation, I turned away, and rather think that, actuated by the same spirit, *I* spoke words enough for eight days in the *one* following." . . . .

. . . "I have just been reading in Blackwood some extracts from what seems to be a splendid translation of the Agamemnon of Æschylus, by a Mr. Symmons. One passage, describing the beacon-fires which announce the taking of Troy, and send on the tidings from hill to hill, as the light borne in a torch-race, is really written—I should rather say transfused into 'words that burn.' * I am going to order the book, which I see is much commended for

* Possibly this magnificent passage, so well rendered by the translator in question, may have arrested Mrs. Hemans' attention more forcibly than even its intrinsic power would warrant, by striking a peculiar chord of her imagination. Her descriptions of the effects of fire are always singularly impulsive and spirited. Thus in "The Bride of the Greek Isles," (Records of Woman,)—

"Man may not fetter, nor ocean tame
The might and the wrath of the rushing flame!
It hath twined the mast, like a glittering snake
That coils up a tree from a dusky brake;

the fidelity, as well as poetic spirit, of the translation." . . .

It hath touched the sails, and their canvas rolls
Away from its breath into shrivell'd scrolls;
It hath taken the flag's high place in air,
And reddened the stars with its wavy glare,
And sent out bright arrows, and soared in glee,
To a burning mount 'midst the moonlight sea." . .

And again, in "The Shepherd Poet of the Alps," published among the "Poetical Remains"—

"Thus woke the dreamer one weary night—
There flashed through his dungeon a swift, strong light:
He sprang up—he climbed to the grating-bars,—
It was not the rising of moon or stars
But a signal flame from a peak of snow,
Rock'd through the dark skies to and fro.
There shot forth another—another still—
A hundred answers of hill to hill!
Tossing like pines in the tempest's way,
Joyously, wildly, the bright spires play,
And each is hailed with a pealing shout,
For the high Alps waving their banners out!"

. . . "Kilkenny is a singular-looking old place, full of ruins, or rather fragments of ruins; bits of old towers and abbey-windows; and its wild, *lazzaroni*-looking population, must, I should think, be tremendous when in a state of excitement. Many things in the state of this country, even during its present temporary quiet, are very painful to English feeling. It is scarcely possible to conceive bitterness and hatred existing in the human heart, when one sees nature smiling so brightly and so peacefully all round; and yet those dark feelings *do* exist here to a degree which I could scarcely have believed possible. . . . Religion, or rather religious animosity, is carried to a height which I could not have conceived *possible;* and I am sometimes painfully reminded of Moore's lines, where he speaks of the land in which

> . . 'hearts fell off that ought to twine,
> And man profaned what God had given;
> Till some were heard to curse the shrine
> Where others knelt to heaven.'

But I will not dwell upon these dark subjects." . . .

From a further letter, dated Kilkenny, and written just before Mrs. Hemans returned to Dublin—

. . . "I am very glad to leave this place, with its wearisome politics, which seem to weave such a net over one's mind, that I have sometimes felt as I imagine the redoubtable hero Gulliver must have done, with the countless, tiny threads of the Lilliputians entangling him in all directions. How *intense* is sometimes the wish for freedom, for nature, for 'the wings of the morning' to fly away, when narrow and worldly spirits are contending around one! There is pain in that passionate desire, and yet I cannot but see in it the revelation of a higher nature, of a being which must have an immortal

home, of a thirst which is not to be quenched but by ever-living waters." . . .

During her visit to Hermitage, Mrs. Hemans wrote more than usual, possibly under the happy influence of the situation of her retreat and the scenery around it; a delightful contrast to the barren flatness of the environs of Liverpool. "I find it," she says, in one of her letters, "a pretty little cottage; and though the surrounding country is rather pleasant than beautiful, still there is a sweet view from the upper windows, and in particular from mine: I see a blue range of mountains from where I am now sitting to write, and I hear the sounds of the river." Here she composed many scenes and lyrics, to one of which (the Death-song of Alcestis) an interesting allusion will be found in the next fragment. She was able to read, too, more uninterruptedly than she had done for some years. She now, for the first time, made

friendship with Coleridge's collected works, to her great delight; and she was so much interested with his correspondence with Sir H. Davy, which also came before her about this time, (in Dr. Paris' life of the philosopher,) as to transcribe a great part of it. It will be seen by the course of her reading, and the occasional notices of books which follow, that the tone of her mind was deepening, as well as becoming healthier; that an increased disposition to consider the conditions which bind man to another and loftier destiny than he fulfils in this short-lived world, was taking the place of her former more exclusive and imaginative subjects of contemplation. The great truths of religion, in short, (I use the word in no sectarian sense,) were beginning to gain a positive ascendency over her mind,—to be regarded no longer as mere matters of speculation, high-toned and picturesque, but as the moving principles of her daily life.

. . . "It was with some difficulty that I refrained from making Alcestis express the hope of an immortal reunion: I know this would be out of character, and yet could scarcely imagine how love so infinite in its nature could ever have existed without the hope (even if undefined and unacknowledged) of a 'heavenly country,' an unchangeable resting-place. This awoke in me many other thoughts with regard to the state of human affections, their hopes and their conflicts in the days of the 'gay religions, full of pomp and gold,' which offering, as they did, so much of grace and beauty to the imagination, yet held out so little comfort to the *heart.* Then I thought how much these affections owed to a deeper and more spiritual faith, to the idea of a God who knows all our inward struggles, and pities our sufferings. I think I shall weave all these ideas into another little poem, which I will call 'Love in the ancient world.' Tell me if you like the thought." . . .

The Musical Festival, held in Dublin in the autumn of the year 1831, brought Paganini to that city. The humours of his reception there will never be forgotten by those who chanced to witness them; and it might be told how the light-hearted gossoons and girleens of Dublin crowded round his carriage, with fervent and noisy curiosity, equal, in its effect at least, to the more intelligently musical *furore* of the easily-moved population of the Italian cities;—how, upon his appearing at the theatre, where the performances were held, "the gods" insisted upon his mounting the piano-forte, that they might be treated with an ample and satisfactory view of his spectral and shadowy figure. But a more interesting, if less lively, description of the effect produced by his appearance, and his wonder-working music, will be found in the next extracts.

. . . "To begin with the appearance of the 'foreign wonder,'—it is very different from what

the indiscriminating newspaper accounts would lead you to suppose: he is certainly singular-looking; pale, slight, and with long, neglected hair; but I saw nothing whatever of that *wild fire*, that almost ferocious inspiration of mien, which has been ascribed to him;—indeed I thought the expression of his countenance rather that of good-natured and mild *enjouement*, than of anything else,—and his bearing altogether simple and natural. His first performance consisted of a tema, with variations, from the beautiful *Preghiera* in "Mosè:" here I was rather disappointed, but merely because he did not play alone. I suppose the performance on the single string required the support of other instruments; but he occasionally drew from that string a tone of wailing, *heart-piercing* tenderness, almost too much to be sustained by any one whose soul can give the full response. It was not, however, till his second performance, on all the strings, that I could form a full idea of his varied magic. A very delicate accompaniment on the piano did

not in the least interfere with the singleness of effect in this instance. The subject was the Venetian air, 'Come to me when day-light sets'—how shall I give you an idea of all the versatility, *the play of soul*, embodied in the variations upon that simple air? Imagine a passage of the most fairy-like delicacy, more aërial than you would suppose it possible for human touch to produce, suddenly succeeded by an absolute *parody* of itself; the same notes repeated with an expression of absolute comic humour, which forced me to laugh, however reluctantly:—it was as if an old man, the 'Ancient Mariner' himself, were to sing an impassioned Italian air, in a snoring voice, after Pasta. Well, after one of these sudden travesties, for I can call them nothing else, the *creature* would look all around him, with an air of the most delighted *bonhommie*, exactly like a witty child, who has just accomplished a piece of successful mischief. The *pizzicato* passages were also wonderful; the indescribably rapid notes seemed

flung out in *sparks* of music, with a triumphant glee which conveys the strongest impression I ever received of Genius rejoicing over its own bright creations. But I vainly wish that my words could impart to you a full conception of this wizard-like music.

"There was nothing else of particular interest in the evening's performance;—a good deal of silvery warbling from Stockhausen, but I never find it leave any more vivid remembrance on my mind than the singing of birds. I am wrong, however,—I must except one thing, 'Napoleon's Midnight Review,'—the music of which, by Neukomm, I thought superb. The words are translated from the German: they describe the hollow sound of a drum at midnight, and the peal of a ghostly trumpet arousing the dead hosts of Napoleon from their sleep under the northern snows, and along the Egyptian sands, and in the sunny fields of Italy. Then another trumpet-blast, and the chief himself arises, 'with his martial cloak around him,'

to review the whole army; and thus it concludes—'the pass-word given is—*France*; the answer—*St. Helene.*' The music, which is of a very wild supernatural character, a good deal in Weber's *incantation* style, accords well with this grand idea: the single trumpet, followed by a long, rolling, ominous sound from the double-drum made me quite thrill with indefinable feelings. Braham's singing was not equal to the instrumental part, but he did not disfigure it by his customary and *vulgarizing* graces." . . .

In a subsequent letter, Mrs. Hemans again lingers upon the delight she had received from Paganini's matchless performances.

. . . . "I enclose you a programme of the concert at which I again heard this triumphant music last night. It is impossible for me to describe how much of intense feeling its full-swelling dreamy tones awoke within me. His

second performance (the *Adagio à doppie corde*) made me imagine that I was then *first* wakening in what a German would call the 'music land.' Its predominant expression was that of overpowering passionate regret; such, at least, was the dying languor of the long *sostenuto* notes, that it seemed as if the musician was himself about to let fall his instrument, and sink under the mastery of his own emotion. It reminded me, by some secret and strange analogy, of a statue I once described to you, representing Sappho about to drop her lyre in utter desolation of heart. This was immediately followed by the rapid *flashing* music—for the strings were as if they sent out lightning in their glee—of the most joyous rondo by Kreutzer you can imagine. The last piece, the 'Dance of the Witches,' is a complete exemplification of the grotesque in music—some parts of it imitate the quavering, garrulous voices of very old women, half scolding, half complaining—and then would come a burst of wild, fantastic, half-fearful glad-

ness. I think Burns' 'Tam O'Shanter' (not Mr. Thom's—by way of contrast to Sappho) something of a parallel in poetry to this strange production in music. I saw more of Paganini's countenance last night, and was still more pleased with it than before; the original mould in which it has been cast, is of a decidedly fine and intellectual character, though the features are so worn by the wasting fire which appears his vital element." . . . . . .

. . . . "I did not hear Paganini again after the performance I described to you, but I received a very eloquent description from —— of a subsequent triumph of his genius. It was a concerto, of a dramatic character, and intended, as I was told, to embody the little tale of a wanderer sinking to sleep in a solitary place at midnight. He is supposed to be visited by a solemn and impressive vision, imaged in music of the most thrilling style. Then, after all his

lonely fears and wild fantasies, the day-spring breaks upon him in a triumphant rondo, and all is joy and gladness." . . . .

. . . . . "—— related to me a most interesting conversation he had held with Paganini in a private circle. The latter was describing to him the sufferings (do you remember a line of Byron's,

'The starry Galileo, with his woes,)

by which he pays for his consummate excellence. He scarcely knows what sleep is, and his nerves are wrought to such almost preternatural acuteness, that harsh, even common sounds, are often torture to him: he is sometimes unable to bear a whisper in his room. His passion for music he described as an all-absorbing, a *consuming* one; in fact, he looks as if no other life than that etherial one of melody were circulating within his veins: but he added, with a glow of triumph kindling through deep sadness '*mais c'est un don du ciel!*' I heard all this, which

was no more than I had fully imagined, with a still deepening conviction, that it is the gifted beyond all others—those whom the multitude believe to be rejoicing in their own fame, strong in their own resources—who have most need of true hearts to rest upon, and of hope in God to support them." . . . .

The next extracts are dated from the county of Wicklow, at a later period of the same autumn.

. . . . . "I was very unwell for some days after my arrival here, as the mountains gave me so stormy a reception, that I reached this place with the dripping locks of a mermaid, and never was in a condition so utterly desolate. In the midst of my annoyances from the rain and storm, I was struck by one beautiful effect upon the hills; it was produced by a rainbow, diving down into a gloomy mountain pass which it seemed really to *flood* with its coloured glory.

I could not help thinking that it was like our religion, piercing and carrying brightness into the depths of sorrow and of the tomb. All the rest of the scene round that one illumined spot, was wrapt in the most lowering darkness. My impressions of the country here have not hitherto been very bright ones—but I will not yet judge of it: the weather is most unfavourable, and I have not quite recovered the effect of my first day's adventures. The day before yesterday, we visited the Vale of the Seven Churches and Lake Glendalough; the day was one of a kind which I like; soft, still, and grey, such as makes the earth appear 'a pensive but a happy place.' I was a little disappointed in the scenery. I think it possesses much more for the imagination than the eye, though there are certainly some striking points of view; particularly that where 'a round tower of other days' rises amidst the remains of three churches, the principal one of which, (considered, I find, as quite the Holy of holies,) is thickly sur-

rounded with tombs. I was also much pleased with a little wild waterfall, quite buried among the trees; its many cascades fell into pools of a dark green transparency, and in one of these I observed what seemed to me a remarkable effect. The body of water threw itself into its deep bed with scarcely any spray, and left an almost smooth and clear surface, *through* which, as if through ice, I saw its foamy clouds rising and working tumultuously from beneath. In following the course of this fall down very slippery mossy stones, I received from our guide (a female) the very flattering compliment of being 'the most *courageousest* and *lightest-footedest* lady' she had ever conducted there. This, I think, is worthy of being recorded with the one paid me by Sir Walter Scott's old gamekeeper, in the woods of Abbotsford. We afterwards went upon the lake, the dark waters and treeless shores of which have something impressive in their stern desolation, though I do not think the rocks quite high enough for grandeur.

Several parties have been arranged for me to visit other celebrated scenes in the neighbourhood, but I do not think that St. Kevin, who, I suppose, presides over the weather here, seems more propitious to female intrusion than of old." . . . . .

. . . . "It is time that I should tell you something of my adventures among these wild hills since I last wrote. I must own that the scenery still disappoints me, though I do not dare to make the confession openly. There certainly are scenes of beauty, lying deep, like veins of gold, in the heart of the country, but they must, like these veins, be sought through much that is dreary and desolate. I have been more struck with the Devil's Glen, (I wish it had any other name,) than all the other spots I have visited; it is certainly a noble ravine, a place where you might imagine the mountain

Christians of old making their last stand, fighting the last battle of their faith: a deep glen of rocks *cleft* all through by a sounding stream of that clear brown 'cairn-gorm' colour, which, I think, Sir Walter somewhere describes as being among the characteristics of mountain waters. . . . . .

. . . . "To-day has been one of most perfect loveliness. I enjoyed the change of the wild rough mountains for the softer wood landscapes, as we approached Powerscourt. I think I love wood-scenery best of all others, for its *kindly* look of shelter." . . . . .

This chapter cannot be better closed than by a few letters addressed to her English friends, dated at a later period of the year, and in the course of the following spring.

"2, Upper Pembroke Street, Dublin, Nov. 5th.

"My dear ——,

"I cannot for a moment delay telling you of the kindly and touching memories which the sight of the ——— (only just received) has excited in my mind. I am sure your friendship will have suggested any reason but forgetfulness for my long, long silence. . . . . Be assured that these recollections are there *for ever*, though the sickness of the spirit makes me often seem very, very fitful in expressing them. I returned from the country rather wearied than refreshed, as I unfortunately found myself an object of much curiosity, and, in gratitude I ought to add, attention; still it fatigued my spirits, which were longing for full and quiet communion with nature. On my return to Dublin, I became a sufferer from the longest and severest attack of heart-palpitation I have ever experienced; it was accompanied by almost daily fainting-fits, and a languor quite indescribable. From this state I have again arisen, and

that with an elasticity which has surprised myself. I am now much better: my friends are re-assembled for the winter, so that my spirits are in a far more composed state, and I do hope that I shall now be able to write to you much more frequently. . . . . I shall write to you again in a day or two by a young artist, Mr. Robertson, whom I wish to introduce to your acquaintance, and it will give me pleasure if you can in any way serve. I think you will be interested in seeing a picture which he has lately painted of me, and another of Charles. The latter is thought to be a most delightful likeness; in the former, he is considered to have succeeded in the face, but to have failed in the figure; indeed, he has proposed, himself, making a complete alteration in the latter, but has been prevented by a want of time, both on his part and my own." . . . .

TO MR. L———.

" Dec. 9th, 1831.

. . . " I really was delighted to hear from you again, and the more so as you had been frequently in my thoughts for several days previously, in consequence of my having met with a gentleman who seemed to be well acquainted with you, though he could not give me your present address. . . . . .

" You know how my health varies with every emotion of my mind, and will not wonder that it should have suffered severely from my anxiety; but this is now passed, and if it be true that there is

> ' Nessun maggior dolore,
> Che ricordarsi del tempo felice,
> Nella miseria.' . . . .

I think the *reverse* would be applicable to remembered sorrow when the spirit has regained peace. I hope our correspondence will not be again interrupted for so long a time. Pray

come over to Ireland, and let us have some of our pleasant hours again. I cannot promise that you would find much to attract you in the society of Dublin, where there is little of real intellectual taste, and more, in my opinion, of show and splendour than real refinement; but this last is a point on which I am so very fastidious, that I ought to distrust my own judgment. . . . . I go out very little, and find my tastes daily becoming more retired and more and more averse to the glitter of fashionable society. I should not forget to tell you how much I was enchanted with Paganini, whom I heard at the Musical Festival here: his is certainly the most spiritual of music; such a power must be almost *consuming* to its possessor, and his appearance quite confirms this impression: it reminds me of some lines of Byron's, referring, I believe, to Rousseau;

. . . . 'Like a tree
On fire with lightning, with etherial flame.
Kindled he seems and blasted.' . . . .

"I am longing to hear some of your music again, and to have it again united to my words. I lately wrote a little poem, the 'Swan and the Skylark,' (I think you would find it in this month's number of Blackwood,) which brought you to my mind, because I thought of the power and expression you would give to the contrasted songs contained in it—the death-song of the Swan, and the Lark's triumphal chaunt. I have also written another, which I should *particularly* like you to set, because I think it one of my best efforts; it is called the 'Death-song of Alcestis,' and is in the Amulet for this year. If you think any part of it adapted for music, I should be exceedingly gratified by its being joined to *yours*. I have not written anything which has pleased myself more. . . I shall soon be writing to Miss Jewsbury, and will not fail to give your message about the songs. I am very sorry to say that she is soon going to India, in which country Mr. Fletcher has obtained a chaplaincy. One can indeed ill afford to lose a friend in this

cold harsh world, more especially a *gifted* friend. How few have the least influence over one's feelings or imagination! I was truly concerned to hear of Mr. ——'s death, for I felt how much you would lose in him, and it is not easy for refined characters to attach themselves anew. Life has few companions for the delicate minded." . . . . .

"2, Upper Pembroke Street, Dublin, Dec. 29th 1831.

"Your kind long letter was most welcome, arriving, as it did, at a time when I have been used to derive cheerfulness, or at least support, either from your presence, or some mark of your remembrance. It found me *quite* alone; my brother had taken my elder boys to pass their holidays at Killaloe, and even little Charles was gone on a visit of a few days, which I could not be selfish enough to refuse him. But I can give you a better account of myself than has for a

long time been in my power: my spirits and health are both greatly revived, and though I am yet unequal to any *continuous* exertion of mind, still I am not without hope, that if I go on improving, all my energies may be restored to me. I owe much to the devoted kindness of a friend, to whom I cannot be sufficiently grateful. I almost fear being too sanguine; but how often have you urged me to 'hope on, hope ever!' You ask me what I have been reading lately: the access to new books here is not nearly as easy as in England, at least for me; and, in consequence, I have been much thrown back upon our old friends, especially the Germans, Goëthe, and Schiller, and Oehlenschlaeger more especially, and I think I love them more and more for every perusal, so that I cannot regret the causes which have rendered my connexion with them more intimate than ever. I need scarcely tell you how every page is fraught with kindly and pleasant recollections of you and all our happy and intellectual inter-

course. If you have had anything new of Tieck's—indeed, any of his works from Germany lately, (except 'Sternbald's Wanderungen,' which I possess,) I should be very glad if you could lend them to me for a time. I have only met with one German scholar since I came to Ireland, and with him I had only a few hours of passing intercourse. It is very long since I have heard from Dr. Channing, or any of my American friends; indeed, I grieve to say that I do not *deserve* to hear from them, for the languor of mind and heart which has so long been creeping over me, makes letter-writing, except to the very few who understand me, a task more irksome than I can describe; the consequence has been that I have nearly dropped all merely literary correspondents. I had, however, lately, a very pleasant letter from Mr. Wordsworth, though he seems to look upon the present prospects of both England and Ireland with anticipations of the most gloomy character. May I beg you would be kind enough to look amongst the

books which I left in your care, for a Dictionary of the Bible, in one volume, and also for Cumberland's Observer, in four volumes. I am wishing for reference to both these works . . . The young artist of whom I spoke to you lately has greatly altered and improved his picture of me; every one now is struck with the likeness, and I can perceive it strongly myself;* he has made also a very delightful portrait of little Charles. I must tell you of the latter, that he has now gone to school, and was very successful in his Christmas examination, having won three premiums. Tell —— I shall be able to send her no account of the court costume this winter, as I now enjoy my liberty and retirement so much, that I have come to the resolution of not risquing them by attendance at the drawing-rooms. With affectionate regards to all at your fireside,

"I am faithfully yours,

"F. H."

* This is the portrait prefixed to these "Memorials"—a faithful and graceful likeness.

CHAPTER VII.

The last days of Poets—Their duties—Mrs. Hemans' favourite books—Extracts from familiar correspondence—Scriptural studies—Miss Kemble's tragedy—Thoughts during sickness—Extracts from "Scenes and Hymns of Life"—"Norwegian Battle Song"—Cholera in Dublin—Mr. Carlyle's criticism—Irish society in town and country—"The Summer's Call"—New Year's Eve—Triumphal entry of O'Connell—Repeated attacks of illness—Fiesco—Second part of Faust—Translation of the first part—Visit from her sister—Excursion into Wicklow—New volumes of poems—Sacred poetry—Coleridge—"Scenes and Hymns of Life"—Letters to a friend entering literary life—Stories of Art—Philip van Artavelde—Death of Mrs. Fletcher—Visit to a mountain tarn—Projected visit to England—Anticipations of death

—A poet's Dying Hymn—Jebb and Knox's correspondence—Silvio Pellico's "Prigione"—Coleridge's letter to his godchild—Retszch's outlines to Schiller's "Song of the Bell."

THERE is no subject of contemplation more interesting or more impressive than the last years of the lives of poets. It is saddening, indeed, to consider how many gifted ones have been summoned from earth before their mission was accomplished; some, as it were, snatched away in the midst of a whirlwind, leaving nothing behind them save wild and forlorn fragments of song—some, sinking down exhausted by long wanderings through snares and mazes which they had wilfully and deliberately entered—some smitten with death in life, the victims of a brooding or angry madness. But, in proportion as these examples of noble spirits quenched—wasted—shattered—humble our pride in human genius and human intellect, it is gladdening to regard the progress of those, too sensitive or scornful by nature, who were permitted to live till calm-

ness, and thought, and humility, had taken the places of passion, and waywardness, and self-approval;—who became not only willing to wait their appointed time, but earnest to do their part in serving their fellow-men, by opening the innermost treasure-chambers of truth and poetry, to the few who have eyes to see and hearts to conceive; or by singing simple and fanciful songs in the ear of the plainer day-labourer, winning him by gentle influences from the too exclusive and narrowing cares of his mechanical calling.

It is with such a feeling of satisfaction that the four years spent by Mrs. Hemans in Ireland are to be contemplated. In outward circumstances and comforts, indeed, she gained little by her change of residence. If not positively *compelled* to make her poetical talent available as a source of profit, she still felt honourably bound to exercise it unceasingly, though, by putting it forth in a fragmentary form, she was hindered from producing a work such as she felt she could

now mature and execute, were time permitted her. "It has ever been one of my regrets," * says she in one of her latest letters, "that the constant necessity of providing sums of money to meet the exigencies of the boys' education, has obliged me to waste my mind in what I consider mere desultory effusions:—

'Pouring myself away,
As a wild bird, amidst the foliage, turns
That which within him thrills, and beats and burns
Into a fleeting lay.'

"My wish ever was to concentrate all my mental energy in the production of some more noble and complete work: something of pure and holy

* I have ventured to extract this letter from the slight but graceful remembrances of Mrs. Hemans, which Mrs. Lawrence has added to a volume of her poems recently published. Was it necessary, however, to their completeness or authentication, that all *similar* memorials should be denounced as treacherous?

excellence, (if there be not too much presumption in the thought,) which might permanently take its place as the work of a British poetess. I have always, hitherto, written as if in the breathing-times of storms and billows." . . .

Mrs. Hemans' health, from the time she left England, was increasingly impaired by the recurrence of severe attacks of illness, with periods of convalescence few and far between; while the advancing age of the sons remaining under her care, added a new anxiety to those which already burthened her. But the years spent by her in Dublin were probably the happiest as well as the last of her life. As her mind became graver, more serene, more consistently religious, those small outward singularities,—which are remembered against her by some who can jealously or ignorantly forget the counterbalancing nobleness and guilelessness of her nature, and the beauty of her genius—fell away from her, imperceptibly. She had learned patience, experience, resignation, in her dealings

with the world—in communing with her art, her mind was more than ever bent on devotedly fulfilling what she conceived to be its duties. Her idea of these may be gathered from a passage in the papers on Goëthe's Tasso—(almost the one solitary prose composition of her later years) —which was published in "the New Monthly Magazine" of January 1834, as the first of a series of "German Studies." She is speaking of the poet: "*His* nature, if the abiding place of the true light be indeed within him, is endowed above all others with the tenderest and most widely-embracing sympathies. Not alone from the things of the everlasting hills: from the storms or the silence of midnight skies, will he seek the grandeur and the beauty, which have their central residence in a far more majestic temple. . . . . We thus admit it essential to his high office, that the chambers of imagery in the heart of the poet must be filled with the materials moulded from the sorrows, the affections, the fiery trials, and immortal longings of

the human soul. Where love, and faith, and anguish meet and contend; where the tones of prayer are wrung from the suffering spirit - *there* lie his veins of treasure; there are the sweet waters ready to flow from the stricken rock. But he will not seek them through the gaudy and hurrying masque of artificial life; he will not be the fettered Sampson to make sport for the sons and daughters of fashion. Whilst he shuns no brotherly communion with his kind, he will ever reserve to his nature the power of *self-communion*, silent hours for

> 'The harvest of a quiet eye
> That broods and sleeps on his own heart,

and inviolate retreats in the depths of his being—fountains lone and still, upon which only the eye of heaven shines down in its hallowed serenity."

The prevailing temper of her mind may be also gathered, not merely from the poems she wrote, but from the books in which she took

her chief delight during the closing years of her life. She fell back with eagerness upon our elder English writers, without losing her pleasure in the works of such of her contemporaries as she esteemed heart-sound and genuine: and while a memorandum before me records the strength and refreshment she found in the discourses of Bishop Hall, and Leighton, and Jeremy Taylor,—in the pages of Herbert, and Marvell, and Izaak Walton,—in the eloquence and thought of two modern serious authors (I mean the Rev. Robert Hall, and the accomplished and forcible author of "the Natural History of Enthusiasm;") it speaks also of the gratification she derived from the translations and criticisms of Mrs. Austin,—from Mrs. Jameson's liberal and poetical notices of modern art, and her "Characteristics of Women,"—from Mr. Bulwer's passionate and gorgeous fictions, in particular his "Last Days of Pompeii,"—and from the "Helen" of Miss Edgeworth. A tale called the "Puritan's Grave," by the late Mr. Scar-

gill, should also be mentioned as one of her favourite works of imagination. A few scattered notices of other books which she read and adopted, will be found in the following letters: and it must not be forgotten, that, to the last, she took an extraordinary pleasure in all such works as describe the appearances of nature—in the sketches of Gilpin, and White of Selborne, and Miss Mitford, and the Howitts. She used fancifully to call these her "green books," and would resort to their pages for refreshment when her mind was fevered and travel-worn. A word or two more from the recollections of the chief companion of her latest years may be here introduced, as completing the picture.

"The scriptures were her daily study, and she also passed much time over the writings of some of our old divines, particularly Jeremy Taylor, for whom she had the greatest veneration. As to the poetry she then loved best and

read oftenest, it was, beyond all comparison, Wordsworth's. Much as she had admired his writings before, they became more than ever endeared to her; and it is a fact, that during the four last years of her life, she never, except when prevented by illness, passed a single day without reading something of his. I have heard her say, that Wordsworth and Shelley were once the spirits contending to obtain the mastery over her's: that the former soon gained the ascendency, is not, I think, to be wondered at; for much as she delighted in Shelley, she pitied him still more. In defining the distinction between the genius of Wordsworth and that of Byron, I remember her saying, that it required a higher power to still a tempest than to raise one, and that she considered it the part of the former to calm, and of the latter to disturb the mind."

"While all these studies had evidently the effect of rendering her more peaceful and resigned to sorrow and pain—that extreme viva-

city of spirits she had formerly possessed entirely vanished, and her delicate wit only flashed forth at intervals of rare occurrence. She seldom played during this time, save for the amusement of others; music, she said, made her so sorrowful as to be quite painful to her."

It may be thought by some that these trifling details are dwelt upon too much at length. But I have felt them necessary to the perfect understanding of the mind whose history I have attempted to trace. The extracts from her familiar correspondence may now be resumed.

"February 3rd, 1832.

. . . "I was vexed that the packet which I wished to return to you, was not ready for either of your two last messengers. I had been prevented from making it ready and writing to Miss Jewsbury, with a drawing by Charles, by the dangerous illness of my servant, (the one whom you remember as travelling with me, and

for whom I have a great value,) which engrossed my attention both painfully and inconveniently almost from the day after I last wrote to you. Not liking to trust her to the care of other servants, I thought it right to nurse her a good deal myself, and had not even Charlie at home to assist me in the office of attendance. She is now, however, recovered, though I still feel the effects of the anxiety and fatigue. I received the 'Observer' quite safely, and subsequently, also, the volume by ———, of which I think exactly as you do: it certainly possesses much *cleverness*, —nothing more, and I was thoroughly tired of that same Phœnix ——, who seemed

> 'To lay her chain-stitched apron by,
> And have a finger in the pie'—

whenever *any* body had *any* thing to do which did not concern her. She appears a sort of general friend of 'every-body's grandmamma:' from all which collateral claims upon one I

shrink too feelingly not to shudder at their introduction into works of fancy. The Bible dictionary must, I imagine, be reposing in the mysterious chest, and I should be very grateful if, at your leisure, you could try to disinter it, as it would be particularly useful to me just at present. If, in the course of the same research, you should happen to meet with an American translation of the book of Job, which, I think, may be in the same repository, I should be very glad to have it also. Now, my dear Mr. ——, I hope you will not imagine that any abstruse *polemical* discussions are to be the fruit of these requests for tomes of theologian lore: the truth is, that I am at present deriving great enjoyment from the attentive study of the Bible, in the society of a friend who reads with me, and every thing that can throw new light upon our pursuit is a source of very high gratification to both.

"Is it possible that I never mentioned Paganini to you? I ought, indeed, to have told you,

how completely, and for the first time, my ——* of music was realized in hearing him;—how I seemed to be borne up into 'an ampler ether, a diviner air,' whilst the spell of the mighty master was upon me. I am glad that you also felt and recognised it, as I was sure you would, because you know I have always considered you a 'much-enduring man,' in having your *real* feeling of music questioned, 'probed, vexed, and criticised.' I wish I could have been near you when you thus entered the true 'music-land,' where I felt that I breathed for the first time in hearing Paganini. . . . . I think ere long of writing a little dramatic poem: I should be very glad to know how you like the little scene I have taken from the life of Blake the painter, which appears in this month's Blackwood. My kindest love to all the home circle."

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* The word is illegible.

TO MR. L——.

"Upper Pembroke Street, Dublin,
"April 18th, 1832.

"I have just recovered from a long illness, —a weary low fever,—from which I think I should scarcely have revived, had not my spirits been calmer, and my mind happier, than has for some years been the case. During part of the time, when I could neither read nor listen to reading, I lay very meekly upon the sofa, reciting to myself almost all the poetry I have ever read. I composed two or three melodies also; but having no one here who can help me to catch the fugitives, they have taken flight irrecoverably. I should like to know what you have been lately composing, and to what poetry. I wished much that you should have set my 'Swan and Sky-lark,' but think you cannot have received the letter in which I mentioned this desire. I have lately written what I consider one of my best pieces—'A Poet's dying Hymn:' it appeared in the last number of

Blackwood: I wish that a few of the verses might strike you as being suitable for music. . . .

. . . "Have you not been disappointed in Miss Kemble's tragedy?—to me there seems a *coarseness* of idea and expression in many parts, which, from a woman, is absolutely startling. I can scarcely think that it has sustaining power to bear itself up at its present height of popularity. But I must not allow my pen longer indulgence. I only wrote from an impulse to inquire after your health and welfare, and to remind you of an old friend, who is always

"Faithfully yours,

"FELICIA HEMANS."

The spirit of the last letter, and of others following, in which their writer speaks of the manner in which, even upon her sick bed, she drew comfort and relief from old associations and enjoyments,—found beautiful utterance in

many of her later poems. Thus, in one of the "Scenes and Hymns of Life," we find a dying girl addressing her mother:

. . . "I had lain
Silently, visited by waking dreams,
Yet conscious of thy brooding watchfulness,
Long ere I heard the sound—Hath she brought flowers?
Nay, fear not now thy fond child's waywardness,
My thoughtful mother!—in her chastened soul,
The passion-coloured images of life,
Which, with their sudden, startling flush, awoke
So oft those bursting tears, have died away:
And night is there—still, solemn, holy Night,
With all her stars, and with the gentle tune
Of many fountains, low and musical,
By day unheard. . . ."

In this tone of melancholy resignation the poem proceeds. Then follow some descriptions of natural scenes and objects, fresher and more minutely-faithful than any which are to be found in Mrs. Hemans' earlier works.

. . . "this foam-like meadow sweet
Is from the cool, green, shadowy river-nook,
Where the stream chimes around th' old mossy stones,
With sounds like childhood's laughter. Is that spot
Lovely as when our glad eyes hailed it first?
Still doth the golden willow bend, and sweep
The clear brown wave with every passing wind?
And thro' the shallower waters, where they lie
Dimpling in light, do the veined pebbles gleam
Like bedded gems?—And the white butterflies
From shade to sun-streak, are they glancing still
Among the poplar boughs? . . .
Ah! the pale briar-rose! touched so tenderly,
As a pure ocean shell, with faintest red
Melting away to pearliness! I know
How its long, light festoons o'erarching hang
From the grey rock, that rises, altar-like,
With its high-waving crown of mountain-ash
'Midst the lone grassy dell. And this rich bough
Of honey'd woodbine tells me of the oak,
Whose deep midsummer gloom sleeps heavily,
Shedding a verdurous twilight o'er the face
Of the glade's pool. Methinks I see it now:
I look up through the stirring of its leaves

To the intense blue, crystal firmament.
The ring-dove's wing is flitting o'er my head,
Casting at times a silvery shadow down
'Midst the large water-lilies. . ."

"April 4th, 1832.

. . . "You will grieve to hear that I am again writing under the pressure of fever, having had a relapse since my last letter. Dublin is very full of illness, to say nothing of the dreaded cholera, which is, indeed, spreading most rapidly: the alarm is, indeed, indescribable; but you know *I* am not one 'to die, many times before my death,' of *fear* at least, and my spirits are, on my own account, perfectly composed. I did indeed enter into all your feelings of regret and indignation, excited by those miserable remarks in ——— ! and to think they should proceed from the pen which afterwards wrote—'*Poets are the guardians of admiration in the hearts of the people ;*'—but I am not now equal to the

expression of all I feel on a subject of such deep interest to us both." . . . .

TO MR. L———.

"Upper Pembroke Street, May 9th, 1832.

"My dear ——,

"I was delighted to hear from you again, especially as the letter to which you allude never reached me, and I had therefore been an unusually long time without any tidings of you. I am writing to you, literally, from a 'city of the plague.' I cannot describe the strange thrill of awe which possessed me, on seeing, a few days since, one of the black covered litters which convey infected persons to those places over which might almost be inscribed Dante's

'Lasciate ogni speranza, voi che'ntrate.'

The gloomy vehicle went past my windows, followed by policemen armed with staves to keep off the populace. Nothing ever pressed

so forcibly upon me the dark *reality* of some evil power sweeping by, like the destroying Angel of Scripture. My spirits are, however, perfectly composed, and I have not the least intention of taking flight, which so many others are doing in all directions; the idea of terror for *myself* would never occur to me, and I should suffer far more from leaving those I love in any danger, than from sharing it with them.

"To pass from this dreary subject. . . . The next time I write, I will send you 'a very fierce thing,' as my little boys used to call such compositions, a Norwegian battle-song, which I lately wrote, and which was suggested by an old northern tradition. I am sure it will find accordant tones in your music, or rather a power to give it life. I am much pleased to hear that the melody of 'Go forth, for she is gone,' indebted as it was greatly to you, has met with some approbation. The 'Good-night,' is so simple, both in words and melody, that it might perhaps please the public taste, which does not

seem very recondite. My sister is quite enchanted with the music of the Chevalier Neukomm, and mentions it in every one of her letters. As I have chosen you for my musical guide in taste, I should be glad to hear your opinion of it. . . . . I have not yet made an attempt to *cage* any of my lately-composed melodies. My illness has left me with such a tendency to head-ache, that I am obliged to give myself up still in a great measure to the '*dolce far niente*,' for which it is at least satisfactory to have so good an excuse.

"Ever believe me most truly yours.

"F. H."

"If you have not yet read 'Eugene Aram,' pray do so. It is a work of power and pathos."

"I have been in a state of great nervous suffering ever since I last wrote to you; it is as if I felt, and more particularly *heard*, every

thing with *unsheathed* nerves; a most troublesome increase of capacities to which I can only hope that my dying some day 'in aromatic pain,' will effectually put an end. There is a line of Coleridge's

'O! for a sleep, for *sleep itself* to rest in!'

I believe I shall require some such *quintessence* of repose to restore me. I have several literary plans for fulfilment as soon as my health allows. I enjoy much more leisure here than was the case in England, which is at least *one* great advantage." . . . . .

Aug. 27th, 1832.

"My dear Friend,

"Do not imagine that I am worse because of these pencilled characters, but the act of stooping to write has been for several months so hurtful to me, that I have at length determined

on adopting this method, until the painful tendency of blood to the head from which I have been suffering seems to be conquered. . . . . If you find my letters legible in this present form, they will not retard my recovery, as I can write them whilst reclining backward. How I thank you for trusting me as you do! If I were not to write for a twelvemonth, you would never doubt my faithful remembrance, and *you would have no cause.* . . . . . I thank you for directing me to the paper on Boswell's Johnson in Fraser: had it not been for your recommendation I should never have opened the Magazine. . . . . But this one article, with its manly, sincere, true English feeling, did indeed well repay me; I prefer it to anything I have read of Carlyle's since that delightful paper on Burns: but I must own I am sometimes out of patience with the fantastic *falso*-Gothic of his style; it makes all his writings seem like a very bad translation of fine German thoughts. I have been living

amid fearful scenes since I last wrote to you: the dark angel of the pestilence has been sweeping down high and low; and is again returned among us, apparently after having retreated. There is every reason to suppose, from the habits of this strange and reckless people, that it will take deep root among them, and long be the upas-tree of Irish soil. Your Polish chief would interest me greatly, but do not advise his coming to Dublin unless he has private or personal reasons. The public attention of this place is wholly divided between party politics and fashionable rivalries, nothing else has the least chance of awakening it. You will long ago, I think, have discovered that I dislike Ireland. I have, indeed, continued but for one or two friends, but they are very dear ones, 'a stranger and a sojourner in this land,' and I daily withdraw more and more from its glaring, noisy, and unintellectual society. Pray tell me when you write whether you can decypher my hand in this form. It will

spare me much suffering if my friends will for a time receive my correspondence thus.

"Ever most faithfully yours,

"F. H."

In another letter, dated from the country where she was casually visiting, Mrs. Hemans writes with something of her old playfulness.

"The society of the neighbourhood seems as *borné* as usual in most country places. I appear to be regarded as rather a 'curious thing;' the gentlemen treat me as I suppose they would the muse Calliope, were she to descend amongst them; that is, with much *solemn* reverence, and constant allusions to poetry; the ladies, every time I happen to speak, look as if they expected sparks of fire, or some other marvellous thing, would proceed from my lips, as from those of the Sea-Princess in Arabian

fiction. If I were in higher spirits, I should be strongly tempted to do something *very* strange amongst them, in order to fulfil the ideas I imagine they entertain of that altogether foreign monster, a *Poetess*, but I feel too much subdued for such *capricci* at present."

After recording the opinion here expressed of Irish society, there is every temptation to name the exceptions, "the near and dear friends," whose companionship was a compensation for its deficiencies. But those only whose names are already before the world, can, with any propriety, be particularized. With the family of Sir William, then Professor Hamilton, Mrs. Hemans held frequent and friendly intercourse: in Colonel D'Aguilar, she found an accomplished companion in the hours of health, a steadfast friend in the time of sickness; and one of the sonnets, published among her Poetical Remains, addressed to the venerable

Dr. Percival, commemorates another highly-prized intimacy. It is affecting to think, that he to whom it is addressed, should have survived the writer.

"Not long thy voice amongst us may be heard
Servant of God! thy day is almost done,—
The charm now hung upon thy look and word,
Is that which lingers round the setting sun,
A power which bright decay hath meekly won,
Still from revering love." . . . .

"August, 1832.

. . . . . "In my literary pursuits I fear I shall be obliged to look out for a regular amanuensis. I sometimes retain a piece of poetry several weeks in my memory from actual dread of writing it down. But enough of this long explanation, the very length of which, however, you must consider as a proof how much I desire you to think of me as unchanged. . . . . How sorry I was not to see your

friend Neukomm! We were playing at cross-purposes the whole time of his stay in Dublin; but I *did* hear his organ playing, and glorious it was,—a mingling of many powers. I sent, too, for the volume you recommended to me, the 'Saturday Evening:' surely it is a noble work, so rich in the *thoughts that create thoughts.* I am so glad you liked my little summer-breathing song,* I assure you it quite

* The song is "The Summer's Call," afterwards published among the National Lyrics. In the music of its versification and the luxury of its natural imagery, it would be difficult to find its superior in modern poetry. The following two verses, I think, justify this high praise.

* * * *

"All the air is filled with sound,
Soft, and sultry, and profound;
Murmurs through the shadowy grass,
Lightly stray;
Faint winds whisper as they pass—
Come away!

consoled me for the want of natural objects of beauty around to heap up their remembered images in one wild strain. The dark pestilence has re-appeared among us. 'Oh! there have been such sights within our streets!' Well, dear Cousin, farewell, most kindly; I do beg you to trust in your unchanged friend,

"F. H."

Where the bee's deep music swells
From the trembling fox-glove bells,
Come away!

* * * *

"Now each tree by summer crowned
Sheds its own rich twilight round;
Glancing there from sun to shade,
Bright wings play;
There the deer its couch hath made—
Come away!
Where the smooth leaves of the lime
Glisten in their honey-time—
Come away—away!"

20, Dawson Street, Jan. 29, 1833.

"I had begun a letter to you so long since, that having been interrupted both by illness and the weariness of another removal, it appeared quite *passée* when I again looked at its commencement, and I determined upon writing another; I was, indeed, grieved to think of your having been so seriously ill, and to feel that distance now prevented me from trying to cheer you more effectively than by a letter; and my own state of health is such as to cause me frequently great distress and inconvenience. I do not mean so much from the actual *suffering* attendant upon it, as from its making the exertion of writing, at times, not merely irksome, but positively painful to me; this is, I believe, caused entirely by irregular action of the heart, which affects my head with oppressive fulness, and sudden flushing of the cheeks and temples. All my pursuits are thus constantly interfered with; but I do not wish this to convey to you the language of *complaint*, I am only anxious

that it should give assurance of kind and grateful recollection; that it should convince you of my being unchanged in cordial interest, and silent only from causes beyond my power to overrule. I thought of you all, and of you especially, on New Year's-eve, which I always used to pass at your hearth. I remembered my own place on the sofa, my little table, and the kindly 'familiar faces' which used to surround it, and I spoke affectionately of these things to a friend who passed the evening with me. Do not suppose it possible that my mind could be alienated from these memories, though circumstances the most singular, perhaps, in all my troubled life, have bound me to a land of strangers, a land of storm and perplexity. . . . I witnessed some days since a very remarkable, I might say *portentous*, scene—the procession of O'Connell through the city after his victory. He was attended by not less, it is computed, than a hundred thousand followers. There is something fearfully grand in the gathering of

such a multitude. A harper, with harp of the old national form, and many insignia of ancient Ireland, preceded his triumphal car, and the tri-color (much at variance with all these antique associations) was displayed in every form around him. But nothing struck me more in the whole strange procession than the countenance of the demagogue himself; it was stern, sullen, full of *suppressed storm*, instead of any thing like triumphal expression; it is said, that he feared an attempt at assassination that very day; certainly the character of his countenance was dark and inscrutable. . . . . I am at present lodging in the house of some devoted Catholics; they have an altar in the house, with a Madonna, before which candles are set every night. I could almost have fancied myself in Mrs. Ratcliffe's visionary world when I first made the discovery. I wish you were likely to visit Dublin again; but pray write if it be not hurtful to you, and tell me of yourself, and that you think of me with the same interest as ever.

I am commencing a volume of sacred poetry, 'Hymns of Life' I call them, as they are to take a wide range of thought and subject. If you have seen any of my late pieces tell me your thoughts of them. My kindest regards to ——; I will write to him in a day or two. When he knows that I was obliged to remove almost immediately after hearing from him, he will not wonder that I did not write before. My love to —— and dear ——."

Early in 1833, Mrs. Hemans was again severely attacked by illness, which interrupted her correspondence with her English friends.

Dawson Street, March 17, 1833.

"I am sure you will have real pleasure in hearing that I begin to feel something like symptoms of reviving health; perseverance in

the quiescent system, which seems almost essential to my *life*, is producing by slow degrees, the desired effect. You must not think that it is my own fault if this system is ever departed from. I desire nothing but a still, calm, meditative life; but this is exactly what my position, obliged as I am 'to breast a stormy world alone,' most precludes me from. *Hence*, I truly believe, and from no original disorder of constitution, arises *all* that I have to bear of sickness and nervous agitation. Certainly, before this last and severest attack, I had gone through enough of annoyance and even personal fatigue, to try a far more robust frame; imagine three removals, and these *Irish* removals, for me, between October and January! Each was unavoidable, but I am now, I trust, settled with people of more civilised habits, and think myself likely to remain here quietly. How difficult it is, amidst these weary, heart-wearing, narrow cares, to keep bright and pure the immortal

spark within! Yet I strive, above all things, to be true in *this*, and turn, with even deeper and more unswerving love, to the holy 'spirit-land,' and guard it with more and more of watchful care, from the intrusion of all that is heartless and worldly. I find Milton, and Wordsworth, and Channing, my ministering angels in this resolve. I scarcely pass a day without communion with some of their thoughts—thoughts fit indeed to 'hand down the lamp of life' from one age to another; and oh, how much needed in *this!* Dr. Channing, I fear, is not pleased with me for my long silence. . . . . I am very glad you kindly told him of my present illness. . . . . You cannot conceive the difficulty of procuring respectable, and at all private, lodgings in Dublin; everything is for show and fashion, *nothing* for domestic feeling and delicate health. I could not help making an observation to an Irish friend this morning, which was admitted to be *most* characteristic of this country, that *domestic* tastes and habits

here require as much apology as dissipated ones in England. Fiesco* was performed in the public theatre here, and, considering the undramatic taste of the place, very well received; it was *splendidly got up* as to scenery, &c. &c. but the closing scene has a very bad effect in performance, and quite convinced me that a hero should never be seen *tumbling down.* The whole was, of course, greatly curtailed. I wish I had room to describe to you the ludicrous effect produced by a rouged, stuffed man, who recited my poor prologue, flourishing a large cocked-hat in an irresistible manner, to grace all my best passages. But my head will not allow me to add more than that I am ever,

"most faithfully yours,

"F. H."

"Do remember me kindly to the Howitts. I quite love all they write."

* This play, it will be remembered, was translated by Colonel D'Aguilar.

The next letter of the series speaks more despondingly of the future. After having entered at length into the question of establishing one of her sons in mercantile life, Mrs. Hemans writes—

"I know not that I can make for him any better choice than that of this profession, and the many warnings which my health gives me, and the increasing reluctance of my spirit (which seems withdrawing itself more and more strongly from earthly things as my health declines) to cope with worldly difficulties, make me very anxious to do what I can 'whilst it is yet day.' . . . To speak of brighter things, I cannot deny myself the pleasure of sending you, as in the good days of the Saturday's post, the enclosed letter for your delectation. When you have read and laughed at it—for laugh you cannot help—pray give it to —— to enrich a little store of such originalities, which I believe he is collecting. Is my geranium still blooming? You have not told me of it for a long time." . . . . .

"June 15th, 1833.

"My dear Mr. ——,

"How grieved and vexed I was to miss —— you may well imagine, and to miss him, too, in consequence of so complete a mistake, for I had only driven for a few miles into the country on the morning of his visit. Will you tell him that my friend —— went on the same evening to the hotel where his note was dated, in order to make every inquiry respecting him, but could get no further intelligence until I received his *second* note. I troubled you lately with the care of a letter to ——, from the sight of which you would augur some improvement in my health, which, indeed, I have cause gratefully to acknowledge, though I continue my habit of writing as much with pencil as I can, finding the attitude far less injurious to me than that required by pen and ink. I longed for you very much a few days since, when the newly-published conclusion of 'Faust' was sent to

me by a very kind German acquaintance I have lately met with. But, alas! alas! my poor feminine intellects were soon nearly as much bewildered as those of our good ——, by '*that celestial colloquy sublime*' once held with Coleridge, and though I do not, like him, pique myself upon the 'clearness of my ideas,' I really was obliged to give up the perusal, finding the phantasmagoria it called up before my eyes, rapid and crowded enough almost to give me a fever. I mean to try it again, as my German friend advises me, but I shall need the assistance of the fairy *Order* herself to clear my way through the mazy dance of Ariel, the Sylphs, Helen of Greece, Thales, Xenocrates, Baucis, Philemon, the Sphinx, Mary Magdalen, the woman of Samaria, and all the other personages, divine and human, whose very names throng the pages so as to make me dizzy. Have you seen ——'s prose translation of the *earlier* Faust? What think you of its spirit? He seems, in my opinion, to have rather too much

of the Mephistophiles spirit about *himself*, to enter fully into the spirit of Faust. At least, there is something so very ungracious in his heaping together the blunders of all former translators, in order to raise himself upon the pile, (like the *bridge of dead men*, in one of Joanna Baillie's tragedies, described as the path over which to enter the besieged city,) that I am not inclined to give him 'a single sous' of my good will. . . . . Do tell me whether you find any difficulty in reading my pencil despatches. I certainly ought not to add to your plagues in this way." . . . .

The autumn of the year 1833 was most happily varied to Mrs. Hemans, by a very short visit from her sister. "Delightful, indeed," writes the latter, "was it to meet after so long a separation; but I found my dear sister sadly worn

and faded, and her health very fragile, though she rallied wonderfully, and was quite her old self while we were with her. . . . . She is at present occupied, when at all able to write, on a collection of sacred lyrics, and what she has named 'Hymns of Life,' and her mind is stored with many other projects, if it please God to grant health for their accomplishment." In another letter, written after Mrs. Hemans' decease, reference is made to this visit. "It is indeed true, that she had not reached the full strength of her powers. Much as I had previously known of the wonderful resources of her mind, I was impressed and astonished, during our visit to Dublin a year and a half ago, by its developements and inspirations. . . . . . Little did I think how soon that awful curtain was to fall, which separates us, still busied from our earthly cares, from those who

'Their worldly task have done,
Home have gone, and ta'en their wages.'

These very words she repeated to me one day while I was with her, as what might soon be applicable to herself, and the circumstance of her sinking to rest on the Saturday evening, brought them most touchingly back to my remembrance."

The later months of this year were busily spent by Mrs. Hemans in arranging and preparing for publication the three collections of poems which made their appearance in the course of the following spring and summer. The first of these were the "Hymns for Childhood," and the "National Lyrics, and Songs for Music." Having already spoken of Mrs. Hemans' skill and sweetness as a song-writer, and of her happiness in perceiving and appropriating the most striking traits of national character, I shall only linger over the last-mentioned volume to point out one poem of singular beauty which it contains—"The Haunted House." The "Scenes and Hymns of Life," however, must not be passed so hastily. The strong desire which had recently

possessed their author, to devote her powers to compositions of the highest and holiest order, has been indicated in the foregoing letters. It is almost needless to observe, that her mind, naturally of too fine a structure and too keen a vision to be possessed for an instant by sectarianism, was expanded, and not narrowed, by an increased conscientiousness of motive and loftiness of aim; that she was more than ever incapable of adding to the number of those familiar and fulsome versions of Scripture so presumptuously thrust forward, and so ignorantly accepted as sacred poetry. She wished to enlarge its sphere,—to use her own words,—"by associating with its themes, more of the emotions, the affections, and even the purer imaginative enjoyments of daily life, than had hitherto been admitted within the hallowed circle." And the fulfilment of this high purpose was beautifully shadowed forth, if not wholly executed, in the "Scenes and Hymns of Life." None, however, who have ever written, have suffered from self-

distrust more severely than she did, from feeling the impossibility of doing justice to her own conceptions, of giving adequate utterance to the thoughts which arose within her, all the more brightly and fervently as she approached the close of her career.

* "They float before my soul, the fair designs
Which I would body forth to life and power,
Like clouds, that with their wavering hues and lines
Pourtray majestic buildings: dome and tower,
Bright spire that through the rainbow and the shower
Points to th' unchanging stars; and high arcade,
Far sweeping to some glorious altar, made
For holiest rites: meanwhile the waning hour
Melts from me, and by fervent dreams o'erwrought
I sink." . . . . . .

And in a letter written about the same time as

* "Desire and Performance," written in the autumn of 1834, and printed among Mrs. Hemans' "Poetical Remains."

the sonnet whence the above lines are taken, she says, "I find in the Athenæum of last week, a brief but very satisfactory notice of the 'Scenes and Hymns:' the volume is recognised as my best work, and the course it opens out called a 'noble path.' My heart is growing faint—shall I have power given me to tread that way much further? I trust that God may make me at least submissive to his will, whatever that may be." She would also say, that could she ever equal Coleridge's "Hymn in the Valley of Chamouni," which she considered as the perfection of sacred poetry, she could desire nothing more. It cannot be said that she ever reached the excellence of that noble production, but she approached it in some of her latest poems—in the "Easter Day in a Mountain Churchyard,"—and yet more closely in the last and greatest of her lyrics, "Despondency and Aspiration."

This volume of "Scenes and Hymns of Life" contains also many beautiful sonnets, or, more

strictly speaking, quatuorzains; for in none of them are the rigorous and characteristic forms of the legitimate sonnet observed. In this vein of composition, hitherto unworked by her, Mrs. Hemans found a welcome resource. She could often record her passing thoughts, the precious solace of her sick bed, in the small compass of a sonnet, when she would have been unable to summon her energies for the completion of a longer work. It had now become her habit to dictate her poems; and she would sometimes compose and perfect long passages, or even entire lyrics, and retain them in her memory many days before they were committed to paper.

But the interest with which she threw herself upon these new projects did not so far engross her, as to prevent her from sympathising in the good or evil fortune which befel her friends; or from bearing a part, when it was possible, in forwarding their plans and wishes. Of this the letters with which the memorials of the year 1834 open, offer a sufficient proof; the apology

for the publication of passages so exclusively personal, has been already made, and I hope accepted.

The next passage,—the last lively extract that these pages will contain,—refers to an excursion into Wicklow, undertaken about this time.

"August, 1833.

"I did not forget my promise to write last night, but the weariness following another day of difficulty and disappointment, took away from me all power of fulfilment. I am sure you will be sorry to hear that I have not yet been able to leave the inn, as all the places to which I had been directed proved so many will-o'-the-wisps, only luring me on to one fatigue after the other. Mr. Martin's lodge, Mr. Keegan's cottage, &c. &c., have all vanished from the earth (if ever they *had* 'a local habitation and a name') as completely as Aladdin's palace; and as for Messrs. Martin and Keegan themselves, I suspect them

verily to be cavern-haunting rebel leaders, of whom it is thought politic to be entirely ignorant; so stoutly did the people in the neighbourhood of the waterfall deny any knowledge of any such characters. Had I been in better spirits, I could have been much amused with the humours of my driver, which far out-Heroded even those of Mr. Donelly himself; he was a loquacious old man, combining into singularly original harmony, the several characteristics of Methodist, Irishman, and sailor, in each of which capacities he seemed to conceive a sort of paternal interest for the welfare of my soul and body—'Aye, ma'am dear, I'll do my best for you; I'll help you to quiet quarters; truly, an hotel that gentlemen come into singing their *sinful songs* all through the night, is no place for a lady like you.' 'Now look to your *starboard* side, ma'am, and tell me, would you just like that cottage?' Then his piece of parting advice—'Now just get yourself a comfortable dinner, and don't ask for any *port wine*, for it's

confounded bad you'll get it.—I'll tell you the truth, that I will; it's little encouragement *my* master gives me to tell anything else for him.' I am afraid I have lost a great many precious pearls of eloquence, but the above will give you some idea of their character. The scenery round the waterfall, though of exquisite beauty, is much spoiled, to my taste, by the lounging, eating, and flirting groups, who disturb what nature meant to be the depth of stillness and seclusion. I have heard of another cottage this evening, respecting which Anna is gone to inquire: whether it be called up solely by the Irish spirit of invention, (which I am now convinced can raise up cottages and lodges when demanded, as readily as a southern improvisatore calls up rhymes,) remains to be proved. If I am again disappointed, I think I shall perhaps examine the neighbourhood of Bray to-morrow. I dislike an inn so much, and always feel so particularly forlorn in such places, that I shall, if unsuccessful, return very soon to Dublin. I am

certainly in all things of this nature, at least since I came to Ireland, a female 'Murad the Unlucky,' and nature evidently intended me for his wife. . . . . I hope you will not find this, written with the very worst pen (I will not say 'the worst *inn's* worst pen') an inn can produce, wholly illegible." . . . .

"Jan. 26th, 1834.

. . . "I scarcely know, my dear ——, whether or not to congratulate you on having at last so gallantly launched yourself upon the tumultuous yet dazzling sea, which has been so long the arena of your hopes. . . . I only fear that you may sometimes want some one like your old friend to be near you, 'to babble of green fields' and primroses, and win you back occasionally to childhood and nature, and all fresh and simple thoughts,—from those gorgeous images of many-coloured artificial life by which you will be surrounded, and which may possibly,

at first, seize on your spirit with irresistible sway. But I am convinced that nothing really worthy and *permanent* in literature (such as I sincerely think you have the power with steadfast purpose to achieve) is ever built up except on the basis of simplicity; and I am sure that the widest reach of knowledge will always have the blessed tendency to make us more and more like 'little children' in this respect. But you will think I am going to take up one of my old lectures on *your love of the gorgeous*, to which you used so dutifully to listen in the days of the Imp Mazurka. Have you forgotten that last precious flight of fancy, which still startles all my musical visitors when they open the 'litel boke' from which its necromantic visage stares into their astonished eyes? . . . You will not, I think, be sorry to hear that many of your favourite old friends among my compositions, such as 'The Rhine Song,' 'The Song of Delos,' 'The last Lay of Sappho,' &c. &c. are about to appear in a little volume published here, and

entitled 'National Lyrics, and Songs for Music.' . . . I have many literary plans, which I am sure would interest you. I have to thank my God, who keeps the fountain of high thoughts still, I trust, unsoiled and unexhausted in my secret soul. Accept my sincere, I may say affectionate, wishes for your well-being in all things; and believe me, with an interest in your career of which you must never doubt,

"Your faithful friend,

"F. H."

"When you write to the Howitts, I wish you would give my very kind remembrance to Mary: I read every thing of theirs that I can meet with."

"Feb. 9th, 1834.

. . . "I cannot now enter into many particulars of your letter, which gave me sincere pleasure, and have satisfied me that many of the dangers I feared for you no longer exist. I de-

light in the idea of your 'Stories of Art,' particularly the thought relating to the Middle Ages, the spirit of which, in art, particularly in some of their grand, thoughtful, monumental memorials, has never, I think, been duly appreciated. Did you ever read a description of that majestic and singular monument, of Maximilian II., I think, surrounded with its awful battalion of colossal bronze figures, in a church at Inspruck? I think you might connect some very striking tale, with a work so impressive and comparatively so little known." . . .

"May 8th, 1834.

. . . "Let me not forget to tell you how sensibly I was touched by your kind offer of resigning to me your long-cherished fancy, the 'Tales of Art.'* . . . I could not, however, for many

* A rumour had gone abroad that Mrs. Hemans was meditating a prose work; and the writer was anxious to turn her attention to a subject which he

reasons, avail myself of this sacrifice on your part, my dear friend. I have now passed through the feverish, and somewhat *visionary*, state of mind, often connected with the passionate study of art in early life;—deep affection and deep sorrows seem to have solemnized my whole being, and I now feel as if bound to higher and holier tasks, which, though I may occasionally lay aside, I could not long wander from without some sense of dereliction. I am sure you can well understand, and will not fail to enter into, all this: I hope it is no self-delusion, but I cannot help sometimes feeling as if it were my true task to enlarge the sphere of sacred poetry, and extend its influence. When you receive my volume of 'Scenes and Hymns,' you will see what I mean by enlarging its sphere, though my plans are as yet imperfectly developed. . . . I am grown, as you will have observed, extremely fond of the sonnet: I think

believed to be in consonance with her own tastes, and to which none could have done more thorough justice than herself.

the practice of writing it very improving, both as to concentration of thought and facility of language." . . .

"May 4th, 1834.

"My dear ——,

"A very long interval has elapsed since I last wrote to you. I know well that no such interval will ever lessen your unfailing interest in me, and that you will hear with pleasure of its having been one of tranquillity, at least *comparative.* It certainly has not passed without some improvement in my health of body and mind, and I sometimes even fancy that a new spring of energy is, or yet *will* be, given to both, from the strong hopes and aspirations which occasionally spring up within me, when the overbearing pressure of external circumstances is a little removed. I have been busily employed in the completion of what I do hope you will think my best volume—the 'Scenes and Hymns of

Life;' though Blackwood's impatience to bring it out speedily has rather prevented my developing the plan as completely as I have wished. I regard it, however, as an undertaking to be carried on and thoroughly wrought out during several years; as the more I look for indications of the connexion between the human spirit and its eternal Source, the more extensively I see those traces open before me, and the more indelibly they appear stamped upon our mysterious nature. I cannot but think that my mind has both expanded and strengthened during the contemplation of such things, and that it will thus by degrees arise to a higher and purer sphere of action than it has yet known. If any years of peace and affection be granted to my future life, I think I may prove that the *discipline of storms* has, at least, not been without purifying and ennobling influence. I shall not have wearied you, my dear friend, by what would have seemed mere egotism to most others, but I always feel, with reference to *you*, that your

regard is really best repaid by a true unfolding of my mind, with its changeful inner life." . . .

" May, 1834.

" I have been really *cheered* and delighted by some passages of a new work—' Philip van Artavelde '—and more particularly by parts of its noble preface contained in the Athenæum of to-day. I feel assured that you will greet as gladly as myself the rising up of what appeared to be a majestic mind amongst us; and the putting forth of really strengthening and elevating views respecting the high purposes of intellectual power. I have already sent to order the book, feeling that it will be quite an addition to the riches of *my mental estate.* . . . . .

It was about this time that, after a long and anxious period of suspense and silence, the rumour of the death of one of Mrs. Hemans' most attached friends, which had for some time been

whispered about, was confirmed by the arrival of letters from India. The last communications which had passed between Mrs. Fletcher and her English friends, had been so full of life and expectation—the artless and graphic journals of one to whom every strange object suggested a new thought, or supplied a new spring of exertion — that it was difficult to believe that so eager a spirit was laid at rest for ever—on the threshold, as it were, of scenes and duties which must have called forth all its powers. The fragments immediately following, from letters addressed by Mrs. Hemans to different friends, refer to this melancholy event. The repetitions they contain evidence the sincerity of their writer's regret.

"June 28th, 1834.

"I was, indeed, deeply and permanently affected by the untimely fate of one so gifted, and so affectionately loving me, as our poor lost friend. It hung the more heavily upon my spirits as the subject of death and the mighty

future had so many many times been that of our most confidential communion. How much deeper power seemed to lie *coiled up*, as it were, in the recesses of her mind, than was ever manifested to the world in her writings! Strange and sad does it seem, that only the broken music of such a spirit have been given to the earth—the full and finished harmony never drawn forth! Yet I would rather, a thousand times, that she should have perished thus, in the path of her chosen duties, than have seen her become the merely brilliant creature of London literary life, living upon those poor *succès de société*, which I think utterly ruinous to all that is lofty, and holy, and delicate in the nature of a highly-endowed woman." . . . . .

. . . . . "I was ill in bed all yesterday from having walked too much and got a little wet, but am now a good deal better, though my spirits have been depressed ever since the tidings

of my poor friend's death arrived. I never expected to meet her again in this life, but there was a strong chain of interest between us, that spell of *mind on mind*, which, once formed, can never be broken. I felt, too, that my whole nature was understood and appreciated by her, and this is a sort of happiness which I consider the most rare in all earthly affection. Those who feel and think deeply, whatever playfulness of manner may brighten the *surface* of their character, are fully *unsealed* to very few indeed. You must not be surprised to see me wearing a slight mourning when we meet; I know she would have put it on for me. Dearest ——, I could say much more to you on her character, and my own feelings with regard to her loss—they have been the more solemn from this cause —that the subject of death and the mighty future had been many times that of our deepest conversation. With all my regret, I had rather, a thousand times, that she had perished thus in the path of her duties and the brightness of

her *improving* mind, than become, what I once feared was likely, the merely brilliant creature of London life: *that* is, indeed, a worthless lot for a nobly-gifted woman's nature! I send you the second volume of 'Phantasmagoria,' since you liked the first, but it was the production of quite an immature mind, in a youth which had many disadvantages." . . . . .

"July, 1834.

. . . . "Will you tell Mr. Wordsworth this anecdote of poor Mrs. Fletcher? I am sure it will interest him. During the time that the famine in the Deccan was raging, she heard that a poor Hindoo woman had been found lying dead in one of the temples at the foot of an idol, and with a female child, still living, in her arms. She and her husband immediately repaired to the spot, took the poor little orphan away with them, and conveyed it to their own home. She tended it assiduously, and one of her last cares

was to have it placed at a female missionary school, to be brought up as a Christian. My sister informs me that her terror of death seemed quite subdued at the last, and that she sank away quite calmly, in utter exhaustion." . . .

"July 4th, 1834.

"You will, I know, be glad to hear that I am now much better than when Charles wrote to you. I was not well when the news of our poor friend's death arrived, and was much overcome by it, and almost immediately afterwards, —— coming to Dublin, I was obliged to exert myself in a way altogether at variance with my feelings. All these causes have thrown me back a good deal, but I am now surmounting them, and was yesterday able to make one of a party in an excursion to a little mountain *tarn* about twelve miles from Dublin. The strangely deserted character of the country long before

this object is reached, indeed at only seven or eight miles distance from the metropolis, is quite astonishing to English eyes. A wide mountain-tract of country, in many parts without a sign of human life, or trace of culture or habitation as far as the sight can reach—magnificent views bursting upon you every now and then, but all deep solitude, and the whole traversed by a noble road, a military work I was told, the only object of which seemed to be a large barrack in the heart of the hills, now untenanted, but absolutely necessary for the safety of Dublin not many years since. Then we reached a little lake, lying clear, and still, and dark, but sparkling all over to the sun, as with innumerable fire-flies, high green hills sweeping down without shore or path, except on one side, into its very bosom, and all round the same deep silence. I was only sorry that *one* dwelling, and that, of all things, a cottage *orné*, stood on its bank; for though it was like a scene of enchantment to enter and look upon the lonely pool and

solemn mountains, through the coloured panes of a richly-carved and oak-pannelled apartment, still the charm of nature was in some degree broken by the association of wealth and refinement. But how my imagination is carrying me away in the effort to give you some idea of the lone and wild Lough Bray! I must return to worldly matters, as I was obliged to do from the wild hills and waters yesterday. I was somewhat surprised at . . . . . rather an ungentlemanly review of my 'Lyrics'—the first indeed of that kind of which I ever *knew* myself to be the object. Very probably there may be more such in existence, but you know my habitual indifference to such things, (now greatly increased,) and I scarcely ever read any remarks upon myself either in praise or otherwise. Certainly no critic will ever have to boast of inflicting my death-blow. . . . . She (Mrs. Fletcher) has, indeed, been taken away in the very prime of her intellectual life, when every moment seemed fraught with new trea-

sures of knowledge and power, but I fully agree with you that she was not born for earthly happiness :—alas ! and those who *are*, can they hope to find it? I shall have wearied you, my dear friend, and will say farewell."

"July, 1834.

. . . "Since I wrote last, I have read Philip van Artavelde. It is a fine thoughtful work, but certainly, I think, rather wanting—as one might perhaps expect—in those ingredients of imagination and passion, which, though their value as the *sole* element of poetry has been overrated, yet will always be felt to constitute *essential* ones. The intellect is constantly excited by this author to examine, reflect, and combine; but the heart is seldom awakened; and I cannot think him a master-poet, who does not sway both those regions, though to few is given an equal domination over them. Shakspeare, however, possessed it; and those who

take him for their model, have no right to exalt *any one* poetic faculty at the expense of the others."

"August 6th, 1834.

"My dear ——,

"I fear I shall have caused you a little anxiety, which I much regret, as *you*, I know, will regret my heavy disappointment, when I tell you that I have been obliged sorrowfully to give up the hope of visiting England at present.*

* Mrs. Hemans had been intending to revisit the Lakes. Perhaps the natural disappointment at being compelled to relinquish a favourite plan, made her somewhat uncharitable to the far-famed scenery within her reach;—for in an extract from another letter, written about this time, she says:—

"Last week I was induced to go for four days into Wicklow again. We got as far as the Vale of Avoca, which I think has been rather over-rated. The only thing I can say I enjoyed in the least, was a walk I took in the wildest part of Glenmalure, which I

Whether from the great exertions I had made to clear away all my wearisome correspondence, and arrange my affairs, so as to give myself a month's holiday with a free conscience, or from the intense heat of weather which has long greatly oppressed me, I know not; but my fever, which had not been quite subdued, returned upon me the very day I last wrote to you, and in a very few hours rose to such a height, that my strength was completely prostrated. I am now pronounced, and indeed feel myself, quite unfit for the possible risk of the passage, and subsequent travelling by coach; and am going this very day, or rather in the cool of the evening, a few miles into the county of Wicklow, for immediate change of air. If my health improve in a day or two, I shall travel on very quietly to get more amongst the mountains, the fresh, wild, *native* air of which is to me always

thought more like Wales than any other part of Wicklow: something about the green solitude seemed *native* to me."

an *elixir vitæ*: but I am going under much depression of feeling, both from my keen sense of disappointment, and because I hate wandering about by myself. I will not, however, sadden you by dwelling upon these things. . . Will you give my very kind regards to ——? he must have known how the 'cares of this world,' though without their accompaniment of the 'deceitfulness of riches,' have long entangled me, and will, I am sure, forgive a silence which has thus been caused, and which I have long intended to break." . . . . .

A few letters immediately following the above are before me, but it is out of my power to publish any extracts from them, from their constant reference to the party to whom they are addressed: and I hardly regret that I am so prevented, for the melancholy of the series deepens as it draws near its close. They speak of failing health, accompanied by such depression as

makes "the grasshopper a burden," and of a mother's affectionate anxiety concerning those whom she was so soon to leave. But it is remarkable and soothing to observe the calmness and gentle resignation which gathered round their writer as she approached the close of her life. At an earlier period of her career, it would seem as if, in the times of despondency which alternated with her gayer hours, she had contemplated death as a deliverer—the grave a resting-place earnestly to be desired. She frequently referred to that touching epitaph, "*Implora pace*," mentioned in one of Lord Byron's letters, as the words she would wish to be inscribed on her own monument.* In the poems, written in her most *chevalresque* mood, some indication of this

* This line of Pindemonte's was transcribed by her, at a later period, in a book of manuscript extracts, belonging to a friend:—

"Fermossi al fin il cor che balzò tanto."

Above was written, "Felicia Hemans' epitaph."

sentiment may always be traced. Thus in the "Siege of Valencia,"—

"Why should not He, whose touch dissolves our chain,
Put on his robes of beauty, when he comes
As a deliverer? He hath many forms,
They should not all be fearful! If his call
Be but our gathering to that distant land
For whose sweet waters we have pined with thirst,
Why should not its prophetic sense be borne
Into the heart's deep stillness, with a breath
Of summer-winds—a voice of melody
Solemn yet lovely? . . .
—Joy! for the peasant, when his vintage-task
Is closed at eve! But most of all, for her,
Who, when her life had changed his glittering robes
For the dull garb of sorrow, which doth cling
So heavily around the journeyers on,
Cast down its weight and slept." . . .

If such was Mrs. Hemans' feeling with respect to death, while in the spring-time of her genius, (for though the words are Ximena's the thoughts were her own,)—it may be believed

that it had deepened before she reached that period, when, to use her own words, "deep affections and deep sorrows seemed to have solemnized her whole being." But though she then, as formerly, took pleasure in contemplating the resting-place, the shelter, the change from a harsh world to the home where

"no sorrow dims the air,"

she suffered from none of the morbid impatience of life which, through their works, is to be traced in the minds of those who have had so many fewer reasons, mental and bodily, to pray for release. To speak fancifully, she seemed to find in every object around her, a type of the bright and better land to come, which enhanced and gave a significance to its beauty. This state of feeling is remarkably expressed in a poem already mentioned—her "Poet's Dying Hymn," which as faithfully reflects the more tranquil current of her later thoughts, as the "Mozart's Requiem" breathed the feverish and uncurbed aspirings of

former years. After many high-toned verses, there is a great charm in the gentle yet melancholy resignation of those that follow.

" Now thou art calling me in every gale,
Each sound and token of the dying day:
Thou leav'st me not, though early life grows pale,
I am not darkly sinking to decay—
But, hour by hour, my soul's dissolving shroud
Melts off to radiance, as a silvery cloud.—
I bless thee, O my God!

And if this earth, with all its choral streams,
And crowning woods, and soft or solemn skies,
And mountain sanctuaries for poet's dreams,
Be lovely still in my departing eyes:
'Tis not that fondly I would linger here,
But that thy foot-prints in its dust appear—
I bless thee, O my God!

And that the tender shadowing I behold,
The tracery veining every leaf and flower,
Of glories cast in more consummate mould,
No longer vassals to the changeful hour;

That life's last roses to my thoughts can bring
Rich visions of imperishable spring;
I bless thee, O my God!

Yes! the young vernal voices in the skies
Woo me not back, but, wandering past mine ear,
Seem heralds of th' eternal melodies,
The spirit-music, imperturb'd and clear;
The full of soul, yet passionate no more—
Let *me*, too, joining those pure strains, adore!
I bless thee, O my God!

Now aid, sustain me still! To thee, I come,
Make thou my dwelling where thy children are,
And for the hope of that immortal home,
And for thy Son, the bright and morning star:
The sufferer and the victor-King of death—
I bless thee with my glad song's dying breath!
I bless thee, O my God!"

The illness to which Mrs. Hemans refers in the last extracts, was the scarlet fever. Her re-

covery was imperfect, and her extraordinary personal carelessness, in addition to retarding it, superinduced another disorder, the ague, which never left her, till it was succeeded and outgrown by her last fatal malady. In the interval of partial convalescence, however, which succeeded the fever, her mind seemed to awake to more than its usual vigour: she was never so full of projects as at this period—never so happy in the exercise of those powers, over which she had gained full mastery. Her interest in the things of life, in books, and works of art, had never been more vivid, as the following extracts from her familiar correspondence,—almost the last which can be given,—abundantly testify.

"Sept. 12th, 1834.

. . . . . "You will now, perhaps, wish for some little account of my employments and studies. As I laid aside my writing entirely (for an interval of repose) about the time of your departure, I can only tell you of several

books which I have read with strong and varied interest. Amongst the chief of these has been the Correspondence of Bishop Jebb with Mr. Knox, which presents, I think, the most beautiful picture ever developed of a noble Christian friendship, brightening on and on into 'the perfect day,' through an uninterrupted period of thirty years. Knox's part of the correspondence is extremely rich in original thought, and the highest views of enlightened Christian philosophy; there is much elegance, 'pure religion,' and refined intellectual taste in the Bishop's letters also, but his mind is decidedly inferior both in fervour and power. Another work with which I have been both impressed and delighted, is one which I strongly recommend you to procure. It is the 'Prigioni,' of Silvio Pellico, a distinguished young Italian poet, who incurred the suspicions of the Austrian government, and was condemned to the penalty of the *carcere duro* during ten years, of which this most interesting work contains

the narrative. It is deeply affecting from the *heart-springing* eloquence with which he narrates his varied sufferings: what forms, however, the great charm of the work, is the gradual and almost unconsciously-revealed exaltation of the sufferer's character, spiritualized through suffering into the purest Christian excellence. It is beautiful to see the lessons of trust in God and love to mankind brought out more and more into shining light from the depth of the dungeon-gloom, and all this crowned at last by the release of the noble, all-forgiving captive, and his restoration to his aged father and mother, whose venerable faces seem perpetually to have haunted the solitude of his cell. The book is written in the most classic Italian, in one small volume, and will, I am sure, be one to afford you lasting delight." . . . . .

From a letter to her sister.

"Sept. 18th, 1834.

. . . . "I thought you would be interested in the two sonnets* which are copied on the first page. I wrote them only a few days ago, (almost the first awakening of my spirit, indeed, after a long sickness,) upon reading that delightful book of Pellico's, which I procured in consequence of what you had told me of it. I know not when I have read anything which has so deeply impressed me. The gradual brightening of heart and soul into the 'perfect day' of Christian excellence, through all those fiery trials, presents, I think, one of the most touching, as well as instructing pictures ever contemplated. How beautiful is the scene between him and Oroboni, in which they mutually engage not to shrink from the avowal of

* The Sonnets to "Silvio Pellico upon reading his '*Prigioni*,'" and "To the same released," published among the "Poetical Remains."

their faith, should they ever return into the world! But I could say so much on this subject, which has quite taken hold of my thoughts, that it would lead me to fill up my whole letter. . . . . A friend kindly brought me yesterday the Saturday Magazine, containing Coleridge's letter to his god-child. It is, indeed, most beautiful, and coming from that sovereign intellect ought to be received as an invaluable record of faith and humility. It is scarcely possible to read it without tears!" . . . .

"Sept. 19th, 1834.

"My dear ——,

"I should have written immediately to you on Carl's return, but that he told me something of a packet of books which you were about to forward in a day or two, and the arrival of which he was to acknowledge, and I thought it would be best to send you a long united letter from us both. I can, however, no longer delay

expressing to you my delightful surprise upon opening your precious gift of remembrance, for which, I beg you to accept, though too late offered, my warmest thanks. This last noble production of Retszch's * was quite new to me, and you may imagine with how many bright associations of friendship and poesy, every leaf of it is teeming for me. Again and again have I recurred to its beauty-embodied thoughts, and ever with the freshness of a new delight. The volume, too, is so rich in materials for sweet and bitter fancies, that to an imaginative nature it would be invaluable, were it for this alone. But how imbued is it throughout with grace, the delicate, spiritual grace breathed from the domestic affections in the full play of their tenderness ! I look upon it truly as a *religious* work, for it contains scarcely a design in which the eternal alliance between the human soul and its Creator is not shadowed forth by devotional expression. How admirably does this manifest

* His outlines to Schiller's "Song of the Bell."

itself in the group of the christening, the—*first* scene of the betrothed lovers, with their uplifted eyes of speechless happiness; and, above all, in that exquisite group, representing the father counting over his beloved heads after the conflagration! I was much impressed, too, by that most poetic vision at the close, where the mighty bell, no more to proclaim the tidings of human weal or woe, is lying amidst ruins, and half mantled over by a veil of weeds and wild flowers. What a profusion of external beauty, but above all, what a deep 'inwardness of meaning' there is in all these speaking things! Indeed, my dear friend, you have bestowed upon me a treasure to thought, to imagination, to all kindly feeling, and be assured of its being valued at its fullest worth. . . . . Have you read Silvio Pellico's narrative of his '*Prigioni?*' it has lately interested me most deeply: how beautiful a picture is presented by the gradual expansion of the sufferer's mind under all its fiery trials to more and more all-enduring cha-

rity, tenderness, and toleration! I have read it more than once, so powerful has been its effect upon my feelings. When the weary struggle with wrong and injustice leads to such results, I then feel that the *fearful mystery of life is solved for me.*

"May I trouble you with a little commission? I am anxious to procure those two very small American volumes of my poems, which contain almost all I have written as far as the 'Forest Sanctuary.' If you could obtain them for me I shall be particularly obliged. . . . . You will not be quite satisfied with this letter unless I tell you something of my health. The scarlet fever has left me with a very great susceptibility to cold; but if I can overcome this by care, I really think (and my physicians think also) that my constitution seems now to give promise of improvement. . . . . If God ever grants me something of domestic peace and protection, it will be received as a blessing for which all my future life would be *one hymn* of thankfulness

and joy. This subject saddens me, therefore it is well that I have no room left to dwell upon it.

"Ever believe me,

"Most faithfully yours,

"F. H."

CHAPTER VIII.

Increase of illness—Mrs. Hemans' calmness and resignation—"Thoughts during Sickness"—"Despondency and Aspiration"—Projected poem—"Antique Greek Lament"—Removal to Redesdale—Last extract from her correspondence—Appointment of her son—Her cheerfulness—Messages to her friends—Her love of books—Further notices of her last hours—Conclusion.

The hope expressed in the last letter proved, alas! delusive: the partial return of strength, from which Mrs. Hemans augured the possibility, if not the promise, of a favourable change in her constitution, was but the last fitful quivering of the flame of life, before it expired. A neglected cold, caught (as has been already mentioned)

when she was but imperfectly recovered from the scarlet fever, took the distressing form of ague: and from that time forward her strength and health declined steadily. The increasing weakness of her frame made it impossible for her to throw off this disorder, which was succeeded by a dropsical affection.

It would be fruitlessly distressing to dwell upon the scenes of pain, and prostration, and decay, which closed her career, had the mind of the sufferer yielded with the body, and sunk into the arms of death with as much agony and as wearily as its mortal tabernacle. Not only, however, were its powers of conception and fancy undiminished, but it seemed to gain patience and tranquillity in proportion as disease advanced;—to cling with a more entire and confiding reliance to the faith which had calmed its tumults, and taught it to anchor its hopes upon the One "with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." Her thoughts and imaginations, during the first stage of her

illness, were recorded by Mrs. Hemans in a series of sonnets, entitled "Thoughts during Sickness," which were intended as a sequel to a previous collection, the "Records of the Autumn." The "Thoughts,"—unaccountably omitted in the "Poetical Remains"—were published in the New Monthly Magazine for March, 1835. They are intensely individual. One of them, on Retzsch's design of the "Angel of Death," was suggested by an impressive description in Mrs. Jameson's "Visits and Sketches." In another, she speculates earnestly and reverently upon the direction of the flight of the Spirit, when the soul and body shall part; in others, again, she recurs tenderly to the haunts and pleasures of childhood, which had, of late, been present to her memory with more than usual force and freshness. To these the following sonnet refers, dated May, 1834; which, as far as I am aware, has not hitherto been published.

"A HAPPY HOUR.

"Oh! what a joy, to feel that in my breast
The founts of childhood's vernal fancies lay
Still pure, tho' heavily and long repressed
By early-blighted leaves, which o'er their way
Dark summer-storms had heaped—but free, glad play
Once more was given them:—to the sunshine's glow,
And the sweet wood-song's penetrating flow,
And to the wandering primrose-breath of May,
And the rich hawthorn odours, forth they sprung,—
Oh! not less freshly bright, that *now* a thought
Of spiritual presence o'er them hung,
And of immortal life!—a germ, unwrought
In childhood's soul to power—now strong, serene,
And full of love and light, colouring the whole blest scene."

"Her intense love of nature," writes her sister, "seemed to gain strength even as the

sorrowful conviction was more and more pressed upon us, that upon the fair scenes of *this* world, her eyes were never more to dwell. One of the sonnets in question (the "Thoughts") will far better express her feelings than any language of mine."

"O Nature! thou didst rear me for thine own,
With thy free singing-birds and mountain-brooks,
Feeding my thoughts in primrose-haunted nooks
With fairy phantasies, and wood-dreams lone.
And thou didst teach me every wandering tone
Drawn from the many whispering trees and waves,
And guide my step to founts and starry caves,
And where bright mosses wove thee a rich throne
'Midst the green hills;—and now that, far estranged
From all sweet sounds and odours of thy breath,
Fading I lie, within my heart unchanged
So glows the love of thee, that not for death
Seems that pure passion's fervour—but ordained
To meet on brighter shores, thy majesty unstained."

It was after the first violence of her illness had somewhat abated, that Mrs. Hemans com-

menced her noble lyric, "Despondency and Aspiration."* She was more than usually anxious to concentrate all her powers in this poem. When a second attack, which again greatly reduced her strength, for a while subsided, leaving her free from pain, she addressed herself to completing it without delay; and, when it was finished, expressed, for the first time, something like a presentiment of her approaching departure. "I felt anxious," she said, "to finish it, for whilst I was so ill, I thought it might be my last work, and I wished, if I could, to make it my best." Her wish was granted in its fullest extent: this ode, which concludes and crowns so long a line of beautiful and eloquent poems, rises higher in its aim, its imagery, and its versification, than any of its predecessors. She designed (for the plans and projects of life did not loosen their hold upon her busy mind, till the Shadow, as it were, stood on the threshold) to

* Published among the "Poetical Remains."

make it the prologue to a poetical work which was to be called "The Christian Temple." The idea of such an undertaking had been suggested to her by a recent perusal of Schiller's "Die Gotten Griechenlands," and it was her purpose, by tracing out the workings of passion—the struggles of human affection—through various climes, and ages, and conditions of life—to illustrate the insufficiency of any dispensation, save that of an all-embracing Christianity, to soothe the sorrows, or sustain the hopes, or fulfil the desires of an immortal being whose lot is cast in a world where cares and bereavements are many.

The "Antique Greek Lament"* with its plaintive burden,

> "By the blue waters—the restless ocean waters,
> Restless as they with their many-flashing surges,
> Lonely I wander, weeping for my lost one!"

was the only poem of the series which was com-

* Published among the "Poetical Remains."

pleted: for the project, with many others, was arrested by the progress of disease, which, before the winter closed in, had assumed an alarming and unequivocal aspect. It was hoped, however, that change of air, and complete retirement, might still restore her. With this view Mrs. Hemans removed early in December to the summer residence of the Archbishop of Dublin, which was kindly placed at her disposal; and, it would seem, derived a transient benefit from the change. But the following letter was traced with a faltering hand, and speaks, unconsciously, the language of melancholy presentiment.

"Redesdale, near Dublin, January 27th, 1835.

"My dear ——,

"I think you will be glad to see a few lines from myself, though I can only tell you that my recovery—if such it can be called—proceeds with disheartening slowness. I cannot possibly describe to you the subduing effect that long illness has produced upon my mind. I seem to have

been passing through 'the valley of the shadow of death,' and all the vivid interests of life look dim and pale around me. I am still at the Archbishop's palace, where I receive kindness truly *heart-warm*. Never could anything be more cordial than the strong interest he and his amiable wife have taken in my recovery.

"My dear —— has enjoyed his holidays here greatly, as I should have done too, (he has been so mild and affectionate,) but for constant pain and sickness.

. . . . . .

"This has fatigued me sadly.

"Believe me every truly yours,

"F. H."

"Do send my kind love to Miss ——, when you have an opportunity."

It was in the course of the following month, that the necessary exertion and excitement

caused to Mrs. Hemans by the appointment of her fourth son to a situation in a government office, was succeeded by an exaggeration of every unfavourable symptom—a greater feebleness of frame, and an increase of dropsical affection. But she bore these not only placidly, but almost cheerfully: so deeply was she impressed by a sense of the public kindness which relieved her mind from a heavy care, and by the private act of generosity by which the nomination in question was accompanied. This—honourable to the giver, for its munificence, and for the delicacy with which it was tendered: honourable to the receiver, for the gratitude with which it was acknowledged —a gratitude unalloyed by false shame or servility—is a thing not to be passed over. It does the heart good to dwell upon such a proof that the cares of statesmanship do not of necessity destroy the gentler feelings of brotherly kindness and benevolence. In every note and letter which refers to this affair, Mrs. Hemans is described as speaking of it as "a sunshine with-

out a cloud;"—she now felt that her days were numbered, and it must indeed have been soothing to her, to receive so effectual an assurance that she possessed friends—unknown as well as known — willing and active to advance the fortunes of those whom she was so soon to leave for ever!

The desired improvement in her health not having taken place, it was thought prudent to remove her to Dublin early in March, in order that she might be nearer to her physicians. By this time, she had almost entirely lost the use of her limbs, and though not wholly confined to bed, was scarcely equal even to the exertion of reading. She was therefore entirely thrown upon the resources of her own mind; "but never," says her companion during these days, "did I perceive it overshadowed by gloom. The manner in which she endured pain—and this, during the earlier stages of her illness, was very severe—surprised even me. She never murmured or expressed the slightest impatience

at its long continuance. I remember her saying to me once, in a moment of unusual anguish, 'that she hoped *I* should never be subject to what she was then enduring,' but this was the utmost of her complaints." During these severest periods of her disorder, she was sometimes delirious—and it was remarkable to observe, from the incoherent words she uttered, how entirely the Beautiful still retained its predominance over her mind. As an illustrative anecdote, I may mention that one of her last casual visitors introduced into her sick chamber at her own express request, was Giulio Regondi, the boy-guitarist—in whom she had been more than usually interested—not merely by the extraordinary musical genius and acquirement, which place him so far above the common range of youthful prodigies—but by that simplicity and cheerfulness of nature, which rarely remain unspoiled in those, like him, perilously exposed to the flattery and caresses of the world, at an early age.

Throughout the whole of Mrs. Hemans' ill-

ness, she was visited by vivid and delightful dreams, to which, and to the quietness of her slumber, she often thankfully referred: and in answer to the sympathy expressed by the few admitted to her presence, who were distressed to see the melancholy state in which she was lying, she would say, that she had no need of pity, that she lived in a fair and happy world of her own, among gentle thoughts and pleasant images, which were sufficient to her cheerfulness. When haunted by the promptings of too quick a conscience, which suggested to her, that her life and talents had not been rendered useful to their fullest extent, she would console herself with that beautiful line of Milton's,

"Those also serve, who only stand and wait."

She spoke often of the far-away friends whom she valued, and would send them messages of kindness and comfort; she was anxious that one

(Miss Mitford) should be told of the delight which her country scenes and sketches had given her;—that another, the companion of her graver hours, should be assured that "the tenderness and affectionateness of the Redeemer's character which they had often contemplated together, was now a source not merely of reliance, but of positive happiness to her—*the sweetness of her couch.*" In short, during this season of decline, she was resigned, humble, most studious to avoid saying or doing any thing which might seem said or done for effect, and invested by her patience and sweetness with a dignity which almost raised her above the reach of earthly consolation. The feeling can be well understood which made her sister write, "that at times it has almost been painful to feel one's own incapacity to minister to a spirit so etherialised."

Towards the close of March, her malady took one of those capricious turns upon which the sanguine are so apt to found hopes; and which

tempt the sufferer, from feeling a momentary relief, to imagine that a restoration to health is not utterly beyond possibility. At this time, her sister, who had been in attendance upon her for some weeks, left her, recalled to Wales by imperative domestic claims:—her youngest brother and her sister-in-law remained with her till she died. But the change was of short duration; the letters and notes before me only detail the return and progress of disease, and soon cease to speak of a hope,—*a chance.** Her relations had now only to stand by and await the release of a spirit, ready, if not impatient, to depart:—of one whose life had been troubled and storm-beaten, but whose death-bed was calm and most affectionately tended.

It now remains for me to add a few more notices

* I have purposely refrained from dwelling upon the minute particulars of Mrs. Hemans' case; these have been sufficiently given in the "Recollections," by Mr. Lawrence, to which reference has already been made.

of the last solemn hours of life; for these I am indebted to her youngest son. "After all the more painful part of her illness had subsided, she sank into a calm and gradual state of decline: I may safely say, that I never in my life, saw her so happy and serene as then. Her love of books became stronger than ever." It has been already told, in her own words, that her love of flowers remained equally strong till death. "She would have a little table placed by her bed-side, covered with volumes, one of which would lie open before her, even when she was unable to read—and she liked to be read to—for though frequently she could not comprehend what she heard, the sound of words seemed to lull her to placid slumber. The latest volume of Wordsworth's poems, which was brought to her about this time, excited in her the strongest interest; and she returned, after an absence and forgetfulness of many years, to the old pleasure, which, when very young, she had taken in the writings of Bowles; the quiet beauty of whose poetry seemed very

congenial to her present state of mind. Almost the last book which she turned over with any appearance of interest, was Gilpin's "Forest Scenery."

Within a short period of her decease, the dropsical symptoms abated; they were succeeded by hectic fever and delirium, the sure precursors of dissolution. On the twenty-sixth day of April she closed her poetical career, by dictating the "Sabbath Sonnet," which will be read and remembered as long as her name is loved and cherished. From this time she sank away gently but steadily,—still able to derive pleasure from being occasionally read to, and on Tuesday, the twelfth of May, still able to read for herself a portion of the sixteenth chapter of St. John, her favourite among the Evangelists. Nearly the last words she was heard to utter were, on Saturday the sixteenth of May, to ask her youngest son, then sitting by her bed-side, what he was reading. When he told her the name of the book, she said, "Well, do you like it?" After

this she fell into a gentle sleep, which continued almost unbroken, till evening, when, between the hours of eight and nine, her spirit passed away without a sigh or a struggle.

She was buried in a grave within St. Anne's Church, Dawson Street, close to the house in which she died; the funeral service being performed over her remains by the Rev. Dr. Dickinson, the Archbishop's Chaplain, from whom she had received the sacrament on the evening of the seventeenth of March. There is, as yet, no monument erected to her, save a tablet in the cathedral of St. Asaph, placed there by her brothers, "in memory of Felicia Hemans, whose character is best pourtrayed in her writings."

An elaborate summary of the principal features of Mrs. Hemans' character, or of the general and individual merits of her poems, can hardly be necessary, if the foregoing memorials

have fulfilled the design of their editor. The woman and the poetess were in her too inseparably united to admit of their being considered apart from each other. In her private letters, as in her published works, she shows herself high-minded, affectionate, grateful—wayward in her self-neglect,—delicate to fastidiousness in her tastes;—in her religion, fervent without intolerance;—eager to acquire knowledge, as eager to impart it to others,—earnestly devoted to her art, and in that art to the service of all things beautiful, and noble, and holy. She may have fallen short of some of her predecessors in vigour of mind, of some of her contemporaries in variety of fancy; but she surpassed them all in the use of language, in the employment of a rich, chaste, and glowing imagery, and in the perfect music of her versification. It will be long before the chasm left in our female literature by her death will be worthily filled: she will be long remembered,—

long spoken of by those who know her works, yet longer by those who knew herself—

> Kindly and gently, but as of one,
> For whom 'tis well to be fled and gone,
> As of a bird from a chain unbound,
> As of a wanderer whose home is found.
> So let it be!

APPENDIX.

Since these Memorials have been completed, I have received notices of two poems, written by Mrs. Hemans during her residence in Wales, of which no mention is made in any of her letters, nor any published trace to be found. The one was entitled "The Secret Tribunal," the other, the work of a later and better period, was a dramatic poem, called "The Crusaders," in which the popular ballad of "The Captive Knight" was introduced. The manuscript of this last was unaccountably lost, or destroyed.

Should it ever be recovered, it might serve as the nucleus of a second volume of "Poetical Remains."

THE END.

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